MILDRED, TOM and OLD SALT

H. O. OSGOOD

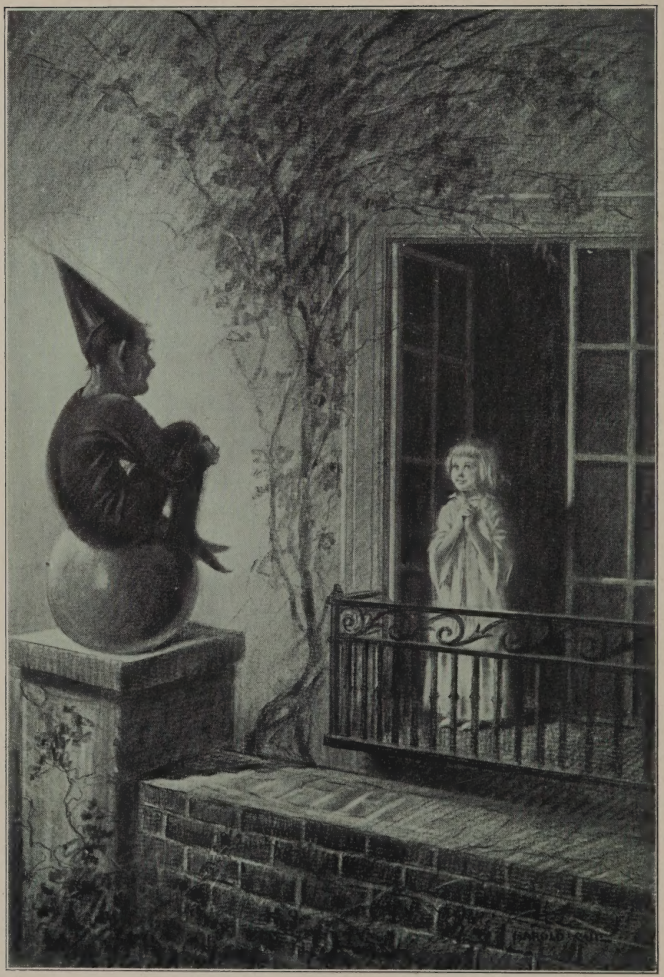
REFERENCE LIBRARY OF
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
2 PARK STREET, BOSTON

NOT TO BE TAKEN FROM THE SHELVES
EXCEPT BY PERMISSION OF
THE LIBRARIAN

REFERENCE LIBRARY * HOUGHTON MIFFLIN CO. * BOSTON, MASS.
Archive
Collection

This book may not leave the Offices
and if borrowed must be returned within 7 days

Mildred, Tom, and Old Salt



"THEN YOU'RE THE MAN IN THE MOON!" CRIED MILDRED (*page* 6)

Mildred, Tom, and Old Salt

Their Voyage in the Schooner Dove

An Entertaining and Non-Instructive Tale for Children from Eight to Eighty

By HENRY OSBORNE OSGOOD

Boston and New York
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press Cambridge
1922

COPYRIGHT, 1922, BY HENRY OSBORNE OSGOOD

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

The Riverside Press
CAMBRIDGE · MASSACHUSETTS
PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

This book is dedicated to its first critic, RESI, Pete's mamma, and to PETE himself, for whom it was written, even though he did say he thought papa had made it a little bit too much for girls. Perhaps he was right; but my hope is that it may prove amusing to both boys and girls, all the way from eight to eighty — especially the latter. And if I've accidentally let anything instructive or educational or improving get into the story, I'm very sorry; it was meant only to entertain.

H. O. O.

CONTENTS

I.	About Mildred	1
II.	New Friends	4
III.	On the Wharf	25
IV.	Stowaways	40
V.	The Voyage	54
VI.	A Cooking Lesson and an Exciting Affair	69
VII.	The First Island	84
VIII.	Something Sought for and Something Lost	115
IX.	The New Captain	127
X.	Battle of the Hairpins	135
XI.	Under Way again	141
XII.	Artful Arty's A. A. A.	155
XIII.	"Land Ho!" again	166
XIV.	Some Surprising Things	172
XV.	Strange Folks and Homes	181
XVI.	On the Way to the Temple	190
XVII.	What Happened in the Temple	197
XVIII.	The Capture and Escape	210
XIX.	Final Adventures	220
XX.	Off for Home	230

Mildred, Tom, and Old Salt

CHAPTER ONE

ABOUT MILDRED

ONCE upon a time — that's the way all proper stories begin — once upon a time there was a little girl named Mildred, who lived in a big house in the middle of a big garden with her papa and her mamma and Nursie. There were a butler and a cook and a chauffeur and several maids besides, but they had nothing to do with Mildred's adventures, so they shan't be named.

Papa's name was just Papa and Mamma's just Mamma, as far as you and I are concerned. Only Nursie had a real name. It was Betsy. When she was young and thin and pale, it had been Elizabeth, but after she became older and rounder and rather red in the face — as all proper nursies should be — it changed to Betsy and stayed that way.

Nursie had been with Mildred ever since she was born; that is, for nearly seven years at the time the story begins. Without doubt she

knew more about Mildred than Mildred's papa and (I rather think) fully as much as her mamma, if not more.

Mildred had a big room in the big house all for her own, on the side toward the back-garden wall, with the great gates where the delivery wagons came in to bring things to the kitchen door. At the end of the room, overlooking the garden, there was a very large window which came way down to the floor. You could open it just like a door and step out onto a little balcony, where Mildred liked to stand and look down the hill to the town with its harbor and ships and the great ocean out beyond. The garden wall, higher than a man, was made of brick. On either side of the gateway stood a square stone post and on top of each post was a round stone ball. Nice summer evenings Nursie always left the window open so Mildred could look out from her bed and see the stone balls, all black against the sky, and the stars and the town lights. It was a very lovely sight. Mildred and Nursie both said so and they were right.

In spite of all her servants, Mildred's mamma was a very busy woman. It was n't work that kept her busy. It was social en-

gagements. (If you don't know what those are, ask your own mamma.) However, she generally managed to find an hour for Mildred to spend with her every evening while she was dressing for dinner and while Nursie was downstairs eating hers. When Nursie had finished she brought Mildred's dinner up to her room. That was about half-past seven and by half-past eight Mildred had eaten her dinner, been undressed (she could do most of it herself), taken her evening bath and been carefully tucked into bed. So our story begins about half-past eight on a lovely June evening.

Nursie had just finished tucking Mildred into bed.

"Good-night, Mildred," said Nursie. "Sleep well!"

"Thank you, Nursie," answered Mildred, always very polite. "Good-night!"

Snap! Nursie turned off the light.

Click! She closed the door softly behind her. And before you could say "Jack Robinson" Mildred was fast asleep.

CHAPTER TWO

NEW FRIENDS

"GOOD-EVENING, Mildred."

Mildred stirred in her sleep and turned over in bed.

"Good-evening, Mildred," said the voice again, somewhat louder.

Mildred stirred again.

"Good-evening, Mildred," repeated the voice once more, this time quite loudly.

Mildred sat up in bed. It was very light in the room, for the full moon shone directly in. She could see it through the window. Strangely enough it seemed to be sitting on top of one of the gateposts right beside the big stone ball.

"Did somebody call me?" asked Mildred.

"I did," said the voice. It came right in through the window.

Mildred jumped out of bed and slipped into the kimono and the slippers that were always ready on a chair beside it. She was not at all frightened, for the voice was quiet, pleasant, and friendly. She ran to the window. Sure enough — on one of the gateposts was the

moon and on the other sat a funny little man with round, squat head, short body, short arms, and short legs. He was clad in black jersey, which fitted him tight as could be from neck to heels. On his head was a black peaked cap. His face and hands were quite dark; not black like a negro's, but something between the color of a new penny and a chocolate drop. Mildred could just see a pair of big, round, twinkling eyes, a broad, snub nose, and a long, comical mouth, like a crescent, that ran from one big ear almost around to the other.

"Good-evening, sir," said Mildred, stepping out onto the balcony. "Did you call me?"

"I did indeed," answered the little man in his pleasant voice.

When he spoke Mildred saw two long rows of fine, even, white teeth, so that the comical mouth seemed to smile in the friendliest manner possible every time the little man said anything.

"And, please, what do you wish?" asked Mildred.

"Just a bit of pleasant conversation with you," replied the little man. "I've often peeped in on you when you've been sleeping, and just as often I've thought to myself,

'What a friendly looking little girl. I'd like to know her.' But there never was time to stop. So to-night I started out ahead of time on purpose to pay you a visit."

"Thank you," said Mildred; and added, just as she had heard the grown-ups do, "I'm sure I'm very glad to make your acquaintance. Who are you, please?"

"Well, as to that — " began the little man.

Mildred interrupted him.

"Is that really the moon?" she demanded.

"Yes, my dear," answered the little man, "it really is. I know the top of a gatepost is a peculiar place for the moon, but — "

"Then you're the Man in the Moon!" cried Mildred.

"There, I knew you'd say that! I'm very sorry to have to disturb your ideas and to spoil all the stories that Nursie must have told you, but there is n't any Man in the Moon."

"Oh!" exclaimed Mildred, greatly disappointed.

"There, there, my dear," said the little man quickly. "Don't worry about that. Just look at the moon. How big does it seem to be?"

"About as big as always," answered Mildred.

"And how big is that? About a foot across,

eh? Well, then, tell me — how can there be a Man in the Moon if it's no bigger than that? Goodness knows I'm small enough as it is. There are n't many smaller. But still I'm three or four times bigger than the moon."

"Then who are you?" demanded Mildred again.

"Me? Why, I'm the Man *With* the Moon. I'm *it*. I'm everything. I run the moon. I carry it up and I bring it down again. That's the reason I'm all black, so people can't tell me from the dark night sky when I'm up there with it."

"It must be a very awkward thing to lug about," said Mildred.

"Not at all, not at all," said the Man With the Moon. "Handles!"

"Where?" asked Mildred.

"On the back, of course," replied the Man With the Moon, "where people can't see them. Two of them. Fine ones. Ivory, riveted on with steel."

"Tell me quickly, Mr. Man With the Moon," cried Mildred. "Tell me — "

"Wait a moment," said the Man With the Moon. "That's rather long, is n't it — 'Mr. Man With the Moon'? Especially for little

girls in a hurry. All my friends call me just 'Moon Man.' You may."

"Thank you, Moon Man," said Mildred. "Now please tell me quickly — "

"I know," Moon Man interrupted again. "They all want to hear that first of all. You're going to ask what the moon is made of."

"Of course," assented Mildred. "Is it really green cheese?"

"Indeed it is," said Moon Man heartily, "just as Nursie always told you; green cheese, very old and very hard, so that it is easier to polish and keep bright. It's work enough to shine it up now, but a couple of thousand years ago, before it got so old and hard, I nearly died from going without sleep. Why, I had to spend almost every minute of the daytime rubbing my arms off, trying to brighten up the old thing fit to be seen at night."

"My, what hard work!" exclaimed Mildred.

"That it was," agreed Moon Man. "If it had n't been for an occasional night off for sleep, when it was cloudy so that I did n't have to make my regular trip, I should never have lived to call on you to-night." The clock in the tall church steeple down in the town struck. "What!" he exclaimed. "Nine o'clock al-

ready! Folks down in the town will think I've forgotten to rise to-night. I ought to be shining now." Spry and surefooted as a cat, he ran across the narrow top of the gate to the other post, where the moon was.

"Oh, don't go yet!" cried Mildred. "They won't mind if you're a few minutes late."

"Perhaps not," said Moon Man, "but I take great pride in being strictly on time."

"But can't you turn the moon around and shine on them from here for a little while?" asked Mildred.

"Why, yes — I suppose I can," said Moon Man. "I never thought of that. How stupid of me!"

He picked the moon up, turned it around, and put it down again on the gatepost. On the instant the town down in the valley, the woods and hills beyond and the great ocean were all bathed in a flood of silver light.

Mildred caught her breath. "Oh!" she gasped. "How beautiful!"

"Fine, is n't it?" agreed Moon Man, with a satisfied smile. "I tell you, it took a good many hundred years of polishing to get that old hunk of cheese to do first-class work like that. Have n't you seen it before?"

"Of course," answered Mildred, "but it never seemed so fine. I suppose I never noticed it very specially, not knowing *you*, you see. Besides, I've never been out in the night before like this, when I was supposed to be in bed and asleep."

"That does help," said Moon Man, who evidently understood little folks. "Why," he added, "I believe that's another friend of mine out there."

He pointed toward the town. Mildred could see a lithe young figure swinging along a field path in the moonlight, coming up the hillside toward the garden gate.

"Yes," said Moon Man. "It's Tom. He's noticed how funny the moon is behaving to-night and is coming to ask me about it."

"Tom who?" asked Mildred.

"Tom who?" repeated Moon Man. "How should I know? Tom Anybody. If I like them I call them Mildred or Tom or Jack or Jane or Bob, just as the case may be. If I don't like them, I don't care what any of their names are. Hello, Tom!" he called out as the boy drew near. "How are you to-night?"

"Very well, thank you," answered Tom. "How are you, Moony?"

("I shall call him 'Moony' too, when I know him better," thought Mildred.)

"Oh, I'm all right," answered Moon Man. "Lighting up pretty fine to-night, eh?"

"Splendid," agreed Tom. "But you ought to be off on your trip by this time, ought n't you?"

"Quite right, my boy, quite right," assented the Moon Man. "Come up here. I'll show you what's been keeping me." He let down one leg. Tom grabbed his foot and was drawn up on top of the post in an instant.

("How strong Moon Man must be!" thought Mildred.)

"Tom," said Moon Man, "this is Mildred. Mildred, this is Tom."

"Goodness!" said Mildred to herself. "Here I am being introduced to a strange boy with nothing but my kimono over my nighty and in slippers too!" She drew the long curtains about her until only her head stuck out.

"Hello, Mildred," said Tom.

"Hello, Tom," answered Mildred. "Please excuse me just a moment, both of you." And she ran back into the room.

"Where's she gone now?" demanded Tom of Moon Man. "Just like a girl to run away!"

"Well, if I know girls," answered Moon Man, "I should say she had gone to dress up."

He was right. Never before had Mildred dressed herself without Nursie to help, but strangely enough she had no trouble at all. Of course she would have liked to put on her best — like all little girls — but she did n't know where Nursie had hung her party frock, so she slipped into the blue linen dress she had worn before. It had a white belt and was very *chic* — which is a French word meaning scrumptious. In five minutes she was back at the window, dress all nicely buttoned up the back and every shoe button in its proper hole, quite a feat for a young lady of six. Only she had n't known how to do up her hair, which Nursie brushed all out and tied with a red ribbon when she went to bed. It looked very nice, nevertheless. When she reached the window, the Moon Man had already picked up the moon. It was evident he was just going to leave.

"So you were restless again to-night, Tom?" he asked.

"Yes, Moony," replied Tom. "The moment you turned the light into my room I jumped out of bed, climbed out the window, and ran off across the fields to you."

"More adventures?" asked Moon Man.

"I hope so, Moony," answered Tom, "though I don't know what just yet."

"Well," said Moon Man, "I see still another friend of ours coming up from the harbor. When he's about, there is pretty sure to be an adventure or two in sight."

"Who is it?" demanded Tom. "I can't see anybody."

Moon Man chuckled. "My eyes are sharper than yours, though they are a lot older," said he. Then, squatting down on his thick little haunches, he raised the moon above his head in both hands. "You'll make him out in a minute or two. Now then — I must positively be off! Good-night, Tom. Good-night, Mildred." He straightened out his legs with a sudden snap and, with one tremendous leap, was off across the sky in a beautiful curve.

"Good-night, good-night!" cried the children, waving their hands.

"Good-night again!" Moon Man called back, his pleasant voice already quite faint, so fast did he travel.

The children watched him in silence for a moment. Then Mildred's curiosity (they all have it, those girls, from the cradle on) came

to the surface and she asked Tom a question.

"What is that, Tom — an ad — an adven — ?"

"An adventure?" said Tom. Tom was two years older than Mildred, you see, and a man, too. So he knew more words than she did and larger ones. "Why, an adventure is something that happens to you, something unusual. Did you ever fall downstairs and bump your head — hard, I mean?"

"Of course," answered Mildred, fingering a recent bump on her head. "Two or three times. But if that's an adventure I'm sure I don't want any more."

"Well, it is," answered Tom "but not much of a one. And they're not all unpleasant, you know. Some are very nice."

"I don't see how it can ever be nice to bump — " began Mildred; and then stopped to listen to music which came to their ears across the fields in the still night. It was a shrill, piping voice, like a boy's, only stronger, singing a jerky, jolly, lilting tune. The tune was very short and the voice sang it over and over again. In a minute or two they could make out the words. There were only just enough of them to fit the tune and they, too,

were repeated over and over again. Here they are:

> Te-did'-um, tee-di'-dum, tee-do'-dum, tee-diddle,
> Ole Davy Jones is a-scrapin' of his fiddle.
> Sit right tight an' don't ye rock 'er
> Or we 'll all be down in Davy's locker.

"Hurrah!" cried Tom. "I know who it is. He's a fine old fellow and we've been off on a lot of adventures together." He called through his hands, "Ahoy, Old Salt!"

"Ahoy, Tom!" answered the man in his funny voice. "Where away?"

"Here," Tom called back. "A bit nor'-east by north, just atop the leeward gatepost."

"Aye, aye," answered the strange man, who evidently understood Tom's peculiar language, for he changed direction and headed straight toward them across the fields. Mildred was just bursting to ask Tom more about his friend with the odd name — Old Salt — which she did n't understand at all, any more than she did the peculiar words they used in talking to each other, but some instinct warned her that little girls who asked a lot of questions of boys somewhat older than themselves were apt to be snubbed. So she kept her mouth

tightly closed, though careful to leave her ears very wide open.

In a moment Old Salt came up to the garden wall. Climbing up a tree just outside it like a squirrel, he leaped across and ran along the top to Tom's side as neatly as the Moon Man, though he was a very large, heavy man, in striking contrast to the little, thin, piping voice he owned. His trousers were as tight about his big, round waist as they were loose around the ankles. A jersey clung closely to his body and there was a flat, round sailor's cap, with visor, on his head. In short — as Mildred thought to herself — he looked like a sailor, a story-book sailor, and nothing else, especially as he wore little gold earrings. Mildred had never seen a man with earrings before. On each cheek, just in front of his ears, he had a little bunch of bristly whiskers, quite gray. Too old a sailor, you would say, to be frisking around on moonlight nights with children. But his heart was young — as you will see — and that makes all the difference in the world!

"What ho?" queried Tom.

("I do wish they'd talk English!" thought Mildred.)

"Blow my tarpaulins!" answered Old Salt. "I went to bed right arly, but the minute old Moony turned his light into my winder, up I got and started out jest as you did — eh, Tom?"

"Exactly," said Tom, nodding.

"Well, now we're here," went on the sailor, sitting down, pulling a very small, black clay pipe from his pocket and beginning to fill it with equally black tobacco, "what's commodore's orders?"

"I don't know yet," answered Tom. "I have n't thought."

"Some more adventures, I suppose," suggested Old Salt, striking a match and lighting the cutty.

"Why, yes," assented Tom, "but real ones, this time. No more poaching in Daddy Brown's hen roost just to get two China eggs. That's too simple!'

"Thet there last one wa'n't much of an adventure, I admit," said Old Salt, contentedly puffing away.

"We must go a long, long way this time — " began Tom.

"Where?" demanded Old Salt.

"Anywhere, as long as we go," insisted Tom.

"And we must find something worth while when we get there."

"Where?" demanded Old Salt again.

"Wherever we do get," answered Tom.

"Oh, all right," said Old Salt. "I'm agreeable."

"It must be a regular quest," continued Tom.

"A reg'lar what?" inquired Old Salt, taking his pipe from his mouth.

"A quest," said Tom.

"What's them?"

("I'm so glad he asked," thought Mildred. "I don't know either, but I should n't have dared to ask.")

"Don't you know what a quest is?" demanded Tom.

"Would I ask ye if I did?" Old Salt parried with a question, like a true Yankee.

"Well, you know what a question is, don't you?"

"Sartain."

"When you ask a question, you're looking for an answer, are n't you?"

"I would n't ask one if I was n't."

"Well," continued Tom, "when you go on a quest, you go to look for something. Understand?"

"Why not?" answered Old Salt. "That's easy. I come down the street — "

"Yes," said Tom.

" — and my baccy drops out o' my pocket."

"Yes."

"I starts to fill my pipe — "

"Yes."

" — and I ain't got no baccy."

"Yes."

"I turns around — "

"Yes."

"I goes back — "

"Yes."

" — and I looks for my baccy."

"Yes."

"Well, that's a quest, ain't it?"

"Yes," admitted Tom grudgingly, "I suppose it is — but not much of a one. On a quest, whatever you're looking for must be something big, something worth while."

"Ah ha!" exclaimed Old Salt. "Now I git ye. A object of value, you mean."

"Exactly," assented Tom. "Do you know anything we could go questing for?"

"Why, lemme see — " began Old Salt.

But Mildred broke in impatiently. (Rather bad manners, by the way, but she was very

excited.) "I know something very, very valuable," she cried, and hurried on. "One day I was rowing out in the harbor with Nursie and the gardener and Belinda fell overboard when we were n't looking and I'm sure she floated away and we could find her on some island or other." Just like that, all in one breath without any stops.

"Who's the young lady, Tom?" asked Old Salt, surprised.

"Oh, that's just a friend of mine. Her name's Mildred."

Old Salt tugged politely at his forelock. (The forelock, my dear, in case you don't happen to know, is the front piece of a sailor's hair. When he pulls his forelock, it's just the same as when you make a bow.)

"How d' ye do, Missy?" asked Old Salt.

"Very well, thank you," answered Mildred. "Don't you think we might find her on some island?"

"Find who, Missy?" asked Old Salt.

"Why, Belinda."

"And who is Belindy, if I may make so free as to ask?" inquired Old Salt, who, to tell the truth, had not been able to follow Mildred's breathless tale of her doll.

"Why, I just told you," answered Mildred. "Belinda's my doll. She fell overboard — "

"Pshaw!" interrupted Tom rudely. "A doll! That's nothing to go on a quest for!"

"It is so!" insisted Mildred, just as rudely. "You don't know Belinda. She's not a common doll. She shuts her eyes when she lies down and opens them when she sits up again. When you pull one string she says, 'Papa,' and when you pull the other she says, 'Mamma.' And when you press on her back, there's a music-box goes off in her stomach. She's got real clothes, too, that you put on and take off, and real hats and real shoes and — "

"Why, she's almost human!" exclaimed Old Salt, whose eyes had been opening wider and wider all the time.

"Yes, indeed she is," assented Mildred warmly.

"Aw, a doll's only a doll, anyway," said Tom. "We can't have any adventures just looking for a doll. That's worse than China eggs!"

"Steady, Tom, steady!" protested Old Salt. "Did n't you say yerself as how a quest was a object of value?"

"Yes," admitted Tom.

"Well, if you think a doll like that ain't a object of value, you're very much mistaken. Eyes and strings and shoes and papa and music-boxes and mamma!" exclaimed Old Salt, evidently much impressed with the charms of Belinda.

"But —" began Tom.

"Have ye got anything better in view yerself?" Old Salt persisted.

"Why, not just this minute," admitted Tom, "but —"

"Then why not go lookin' fer Belindy? She's a real object of value. I tell ye, them fancy dolls from Paris cost jest a heap o' money. I never see one, but I've heard tell of 'em. Like ez not she floated onto some island er other, jest as Mildred says."

"Oh, thank you!" cried Mildred.

"All right, then," said Tom, realizing they were two to his one. "I don't mind *saying* that we're going in quest of Belinda. Then, when we get wherever we do get to, very likely we'll find something more worth while looking for."

"Oh, no, we won't!" cried Mildred.

"We?" said Tom. "You don't think you're going with us, do you?"

Tears sprang to Mildred's eyes, so disappointed was she at the idea of being left behind, but before she could find her voice to protest Old Salt came to her rescue again.

"Of course Mildred is agoin' along!" he exclaimed, knocking the ashes out of his pipe and standing up. "It's *her* Belindy, ain't it?"

"Whoever heard of a girl going on an adventure?" demanded Tom. "She'll spoil it."

"No, I won't," she eagerly protested.

Old Salt settled the dispute promptly. "If she don't go, I don't," said he. "I ain't a bit particler about it — gettin' too old fer adventures."

"All right," agreed Tom, seeing his own chance of adventures to be rapidly vanishing. "Come on, then!"

"But how shall I get over to you?" asked Mildred.

"Climb up on the balcony rail and jump as hard as you can. Old Salt will catch you," said Tom.

It was a good thirty feet from the balcony across to the gatepost, farther than any grown-up man can jump, let alone a little girl of six. However, Mildred did as Tom told her without hesitation, and sure enough — she sailed

through the air straight for the gatepost, Old Salt catching her in his arms as if she had been a feather instead of a decidedly solid little girl. Then they all joined hands and jumped down from the wall together.

"Hurrah!" cried Tom. "We're off! How do we get to the island?"

"Foller me!" answered Old Salt, making off down the hillside toward the town at a rapid pace. "I'll show ye!"

CHAPTER THREE

ON THE WHARF

It was easy walking — more like flying, thought Mildred — through the fields that pitched sharply down to the edge of the town. Soon they were in the outskirts. On they went through alleys and byways, Old Salt always ahead. There were very few persons about. It seemed as if Moon Man drove most people in the town into bed instead of drawing them out of it, as he had our three adventurers. When they had walked quite a distance through the town, Old Salt stopped in front of a board fence. It was a very high one. Tall as Old Salt was, it was more than twice as tall as he. In it was a door as low as the fence was high. Even Mildred could not go through it without stooping, and as for Old Salt, it was perfectly plain that the only way for him was on hands and knees. Old Salt rapped sharply on the door.

"Who's there?" cried some one within.

In answer Old Salt began to sing the same tune the children had heard before, but with different words this time:

Tee-did'-um, tee-di'-dum, tee-do'-dum, tee-diddle,
Ole Davy Jones is a-scrapin' of his fiddle.
"Yo, ho, ho, and a bottle o' pop"
Is the bestest tune in all his shop.

"Old Bill Salt, by gum!" exclaimed the person inside.

The lock turned, the door opened, and Old Salt led the way through on hands and knees, with Mildred and Tom literally at his heels.

"Hello, Bill Salt," said the man who had opened the gate.

He was a tiny bit of a fellow, a dwarf, smaller even than Moon Man. The big key with which he had unlocked the gate was nearly as long as his forearm. Evidently, like all dwarfs, he was strong out of all proportion to his size. Mildred and Tom, having inspected the little man with, I am afraid, more interest than politeness, looked about them and saw that they were on a wharf. One side was free; along the other lay a big sailing ship — anyway, it had two masts and looked big to them. Near the outer end of the wharf there stood a small house, and beyond it they could see the quiet harbor with the great ocean still farther out. A gentle breeze ruffled the surface of the water. Moon Man, still climbing up into

the sky, far, far away, made the bright beams dance on each little wavelet.

Old Salt, getting up from all fours, returned the greeting of the little man.

"Hello, Jim. Why don't ye make yer gate bigger?"

"It's big enough for me," answered Jim.

"Well, it ain't fer me," replied Old Salt.

"It's *my* gate," said Jim sharply.

"I know it is," said Old Salt, "but you ought to make it bigger just the same."

"I ought n't," said Jim.

"Yes, you ought," persisted Old Salt.

"Ought n't!" cried Jim.

"Ought!" yelled Old Salt.

"Ought n't!" shrieked Jim.

"Ought!" roared Old Salt.

By this time Jim, scenting danger, began to run down the wharf, Old Salt close after him. Jim was very agile and dodged about out of Old Salt's reach for some time, but the big man finally cornered him at the very end of the wharf, picked him up in one hand, tore the key from his grasp with the other, and pitched it as far as he could out into the harbor. Then, grasping Jim by one arm, he swung him around his head three or four times and flung him

after the key. Mildred shrieked. Even Tom cried out "Oh!"

"Bless you, my dears," said Old Salt, turning away just as if nothing out of the ordinary had happened, "he's all right. Swims like a fish."

Indeed, Jim was already headed for the next wharf, forging along as fast as his sturdy little arms and legs could propel him.

"Who is he, anyway?" asked Tom.

"Him?" answered Old Salt. "Oh, just Jim. Owns this wharf. Why, shiver my timbers! He would n't 'a' been happy if I had n't hove him overboard. I s'pose I've come onto this here wharf two hundred times at the least count, and ev'ry time from the very fust it wuz jest the same: a little friendly row — me sayin' 'ought' and him 'ought n't' — and then me heavin' the key overboard and him after it. It's a reg'lar game between us, just like casino or checkers. Only I always wins, because he can't use his old wharf till he has another key made."

"But," began Mildred, "do you really think it is right to treat him so? It's his wharf, and besides —"

"I ought n't!" Across the water came the

big, gruff voice which fitted tiny Jim so funnily. He had reached the next wharf, clambered up a ladder and was perched on the endmost post, a quaint figure in the moonlight.

"Did n't I tell ye he likes it?" demanded Old Salt, grinning broadly. "You ought!" he yelled back.

"Ought n't!" roared Jim in his deep voice.

"Ought!" Old Salt shrieked back in his piping tenor.

Tom grabbed him by the arm and started to drag him across the wharf. "We'll never find Belinda or anything else if you two keep on playing that game all night," said he. "What are we going to do — sail off in this ship?"

"Sure," answered Old Salt. "How can we get to an island without a ship?"

"What ship is it?" asked Mildred.

"Schooner Dove, Captain John Bowline," replied Old Salt.

Only he really said, "Cap'n John Bolin." So "Cap'n Bolin" he shall be for us.

"And is she going to the islands?"

"How should I know, Mildred?" answered Old Salt. "What islands?"

"Why, the islands where Belinda is."

"Is she on many of 'em?" asked Old Salt.

"How can she be?" replied Mildred. "She's only on one, of course." And she thought: "I wonder if he's really as stupid as he pretends to be." (What do you think?)

"And which one might thet be?"

"How do I know?"

"Well, Mildred, if you don't know, I'm sure I don't. Anyway, the Dove will go there, you may be sure o' that."

The conversation was beginning to sound very much like riddles to Mildred. She was just going to ask how she could be sure of it when Tom stopped her by asking a question himself.

"Will Cap'n Bolin take us?"

"He'll have to. We'll stow away. He won't know it till we're at sea."

"What is 'stow away'?" asked Mildred.

Tom did not know either, but not for anything would he have shown his ignorance by asking.

"Oh, that's jest the same as 'hide away' in land talk," answered Old Salt.

By this time they had reached the side of the wharf where the Dove lay. The schooner looked very big indeed so close at hand.

"Oh!" cried Mildred. "What a funny

ship! I never saw one with fire escapes before."

No wonder she thought so, for there were three flights of stairs running down the side of the ship, all the way from the rail to the water, one forward, near the bow, one amidships, and one astern. (In case you don't know, my dear, the bow is the front end of a ship and the stern the other end.)

"Them ain't no fire escapes," said Old Salt. "Them's the ship's ladders. Cap'n Bolin is very careful about himself and his men and he likes to make it easy to git on and off. The forward ladder's fer the crew, the midships one fer friends what come a-visitin' — landlubbers and sech — and the stern one fer himself."

Tom was studying the ship with eager eyes.

"Those are n't ladders," said he. "They're stairs, just like in a house."

"All right, Tom," replied the sailor. "Have it your own way. They may be stairs, but they're ladders, I tell ye. Anyway, they're ship's ladders."

Tom was puzzled and thought it best to change the subject.

"How do we get on the ship?" he asked.

"How do we get aboard?" began Old Salt. "Why —"

Tom interrupted him.

"Who wants a board?"

"No one," answered Old Salt. "Now, Tom, I know ye're a very smart young chap (I wonder if he was a bit sarcastic!), but if ye're goin' to sail with me, ye'll have to learn sailor words. 'Git aboard' means jest what you said — ter git on the ship."

"Then why say get a board?" insisted Tom.

"Lor' bless ye, don't ask *me!* Only ye got to say it thet way or ye're a double-dyed landlubber. Let's set down an' talk things over."

So they sat down together in the shadow of the small storehouse, leaning their backs against it to be comfortable.

"Where's the best place to hide?" asked Tom.

"To stow away!" cried Mildred, correcting him. She was very clever at remembering anything, once she had been told.

"Right y' are, Mildred," said Old Salt. "Why — why —" He stopped to consider. "I never stowed away myself before, though

I've seen enough fellers as has done it. Howsumdever, I should say in the galley. There's always somethin' to eat there."

"What's the galley?" asked Mildred.

This time it was Tom's turn. "I know!" he cried. "The same as the kitchen in a house, is n't it?"

"Right y' are, Tom," agreed Old Salt. "Most ships has their galleys on deck, but Cap'n Bolin is so tender-hearted he can't bear to have Cookie up on deck in a wind and sea. Besides, the food might git spilt, he thinks. So the galley is below decks on the Dove an' thet makes it easier and safer to stow away in."

"Will it be a long voyage?" asked Mildred. "Where are the islands?"

"Well, now," answered Old Salt, "it might be long and again it might n't. I ain't been out among them islands where Belindy is fer several years."

"But what islands are they?" demanded Tom.

"I don't know," answered Old Salt. "Anyway, I ain't been among 'em fer a long time, fer I ain't been among *any* islands fer a long time."

"How's that?" asked Tom. "You're a real sailor, are n't you?"

"Of course I am!" Old Salt exclaimed indignantly. "What d' ye s'pose I'd wear funny clothes like these fer if I was n't? But I been sailin' in a different kind of ship lately."

"A different kind?" asked Mildred.

"Yes — an airship!"

"An airship!" exclaimed both children together, all attention; and Tom added: "What were you doing in an airship?"

"Oh, you know the Old Woman," said Old Salt.

"What Old Woman?"

"Why, the one that cleans up the sky."

"Of course, of course," cried Mildred, clapping her hands in delight. "You know, Tom. It's Mother Goose." And she recited the verses.

There was an old woman tossed in a blanket
  Forty times as high as the moon;
But where she was going no mortal could tell
  For under her arm she carried a broom.
"Old woman, old woman, old woman," said I,
  "Whither, ah, whither, ah, whither so high?"
"To sweep the cobwebs from the sky
  And I'll be with you by and by."

"Yes, that's her," said Old Salt; "all except the tossin' in a blanket part. She's Moony's sister and he'd never allow that."

"Moony's sister!" exclaimed the children, really astonished.

"Sartain — and as nice an old woman as ever lived! She cleans a path for him so he won't get all tangled up in the cobwebs. Ye don't see the moon on cloudy nights, do ye?"

"No."

"Them are the nights when she don't git started on time. All them things what look like clouds from down here are jest millions of great big cobwebs when you're up among 'em."

"But what about the airship?"

"I wuz jest gettin' to that, Tom. Ye see, 'bout three years ago she wuz laid up very bad with a long spell of rheumatics. Moony had an awful hard time of it tryin' to git through them cobwebs till he happened to think of an airship, and knowin' me so well, he got me to run it for him. We done a fine job keepin' away the cobwebs, if I do say it who should n't."

"But there were some stormy and cloudy nights, were n't there?" asked Mildred.

"Jest onct in a while," admitted Old Salt. "Like all airships, sometimes ours did n't run jest smooth."

"And now?" asked Tom.

"Now his sister's all well again, God bless her," said Old Salt, "and back at work. Did n't she do a good job to-night? I rather think so!" And the children agreed with him, for the moonlight could not have been brighter or clearer.

"Well," continued the sailor, rising, "we'd better be gittin' aboard. Tide'll be up in a hour an' Cap'n Bolin will want to sail by that time."

"Is there anything we need?" asked Tom. "Provisions or something else?"

"Oh, there's plenty to eat aboard," Old Salt answered. "Trust Cap'n Bolin for that. Have either of ye been for a long voyage before?"

"No," they answered together.

"Hm — ye might be seasick."

"Oh, I hope not!" cried Mildred.

She never had been seasick, but she had heard Papa and Mamma tell how unpleasant it was. Tom, too, did n't fancy the idea, though he thought it best to say nothing.

"There's only one thing for it," said Old Salt. "We must get some limes."

"Pickled limes?" asked Mildred. She liked them.

"No," answered Old Salt. "Just plain, raw limes. They're a sure cure fer seasickness. When ye get to feelin' bad, ye jest make a little hole in one and suck it like an orange. It tastes so awful sour ye fergit all about bein' sick — and there ye are!"

Tom made a wry face. "Very well," said he, "if we must. But where are there any?"

"Perhaps in the storehouse," Old Salt replied. "There's likely to be most anything in a well-kept storehouse."

The door was locked, but they soon found a loose window. Old Salt lifted Tom up and he opened it and crawled in, unlocking the door to admit the others. There were hundreds and hundreds of fine things inside, though from the outside the little house did not appear big enough to hold half of them. After a few minutes' hunt they found the crate of limes they were after. The children had a grand time peeking into all the boxes and barrels, crying out with joy whenever they found anything new that pleased them. They surely

never would have got any farther on the quest if Old Salt, sticking the crate of limes under his arm, had not threatened to go out and lock them in; but when they pleaded with him, he agreed to let each of them take some one thing for the voyage. Mildred quickly selected a big wooden box of hairpins — thousands of them — and Tom took a crate of bows and arrows that he found in a corner, just as if he were going to shoot Indians instead of to hunt for a doll. After all Old Salt had to give the limes to Tom to carry while he balanced Mildred's big box on one shoulder and Tom's crate on the other.

"But is n't it stealing?" objected Mildred, as they went out.

"Oh, no," answered Old Salt. "We 'll do it all right and shipshape. Got a pencil, Tom?"

"Yes," answered the boy, pulling a stub out of his pocket.

"Then write what I tell you on the wall right side er the door. Fust, 'I.O.U.' "

"I.O.U.," repeated Tom, writing the letters in a firm, round hand.

"One crate limes, one box hairpins, and one crate bows and arrers," Old Salt continued.

"Done," said Tom.

"And now write, 'Old Bill Salt,' under it. Ye see when Jim gets his new key made and comes back on his wharf, he'll read that and know I'm agoin' to put them things back or some jest like 'em when the voyage is over."

"But if he wants them before that?" suggested Mildred.

"Then he'll hev to want, and sarve him right, too," said Old Salt. "What right's he got, I'd like to know, wantin' sech things as these? He's sour enough already, so he don't need no limes; he's bald, so he could n't use hairpins if he wanted to; and bows and arrers is only fer boys and Injins. He ain't neither, though he's worse than both. Goodness knows what he had 'em for anyway!"

CHAPTER FOUR

STOWAWAYS

"WHICH fire escape do we go up?" asked Tom, as they reached the side of the ship.

"Now jest listen to me, Tom," said Old Salt, as nearly cross as he could be. "I'm an able seaman and I takes pride in my perfession. If you or Mildred calls them ladders 'fire escapes' ag'in, this here voyage will be over before it begins. We'll go up the midships ladder."

Easier said than done, as Old Salt found out when he tried to climb up with the box on one shoulder and the crate on the other.

"There," said Tom frettishly, "I knew those hairpins would be a nuisance, but Mildred would take them!"

"Ain't she got as much right to 'em as you to yer bows an' arrers?" demanded Old Salt. "They'll be more use than your things, too, I bet. I never seen anything yet a woman could n't make out of 'em. Easy does it!"

He set down the crate and carried the hairpins up first. Returning, he shouldered the

bows and arrows and the children followed him up the ladder.

"Sh!" said Old Salt. "Go light!"

No need to warn them. Never did children tread more lightly on tiptoe. Mildred thrilled with the mystery of the first real step into the unknown. Tom thrilled too, I am sure, but it is n't good form for boys to thrill as much as girls do, so he pretended to himself that stowing away was no more unusual than playing marbles. In a moment they were over the rail and on the deck. The deck of a ship is a very peculiar thing, when you stop to think of it. It is the ship's main floor, for all the important work goes on there; at the same time it is the roof, for all the rooms lie underneath it. The moon had just gone behind some clouds — a few cobwebs the Old Woman had missed in her nightly journey. It was so dark the children could see very little, but Old Salt felt quite at home, just as you do inside your own house in the dark. He picked up the hairpin box and they started forward on tiptoe, Mildred hanging on to his jersey and Tom grasping the tail of Mildred's skirt. They reached the forward companionway (the front stairs of a ship, my dear) and were just starting to go below

when they were startled by voices up in the bow.

"Eighty kings!" said one voice.

"Hundred aces!" exclaimed another.

"Marriage and royal marriage!" cried a third. "That's sixty."

"What's that?" whispered Mildred, frightened.

"I swan!" exclaimed Old Salt. "There's those fat lubbers of a crew settin' up there playin' pinochle, when they're supposed to be asleep hours ago! Cap'n Bolin'll be goin' out in an hour's time and a fine, sleepy crew he'll have!"

The children peeped around the sides of the companionway. Sure enough, there were three men sitting on small kegs and playing cards on the end of a larger one between them by the light of the ship's lantern which hung from the forestay.

"I'll scare 'em, the rascals!" exclaimed Old Salt under his breath.

He groaned in a most horrible and dismal manner. The men sat as if paralyzed. One of them, just ready to slap a winning card down with a bang, paused with his arm in the air as if it were frozen there.

"That 's Ben Buncombe, the biggest and laziest of 'em all," whispered Old Salt. " Watch me fix him!"

He emitted another fearful groan, worse than the first. Even the children were frightened. Ben gave a terrible howl.

"Ghosts!" cried one of the others.

"Lord save us!" yelled the third.

They dropped the cards and jumped up, overturning the kegs with a tremendous clatter. Big Ben, nearest the rail, leaped clean overboard, hitting the water with a great splash. The other two dove for the forecastle hatch (the opening down into the forecastle, my dears, where the sailors live on a ship.) There was barely room for one to go down at a time and they stuck fast, kicking and shouting, struggling to get through first. Old Salt and the children laughed until they were weak. They had never seen anything funnier, not even the clowns in the circus.

"Come on," said the sailor finally, leading the way below before the frightened men could recover their courage and start to look for the "ghosts."

It was very dark down there, but evidently Old Salt knew his way about on the Dove for,

telling them to remain at the foot of the steps, he left them. They heard a door open and in a moment something like a great window opened in the side of the ship and they could see out onto the moonlit wharf. They went forward at once and found themselves in a good-sized room.

"This here's the galley," Old Salt greeted them. "And a very fine galley it is!"

"But what's that thing you just opened?" asked Tom. "I never saw anything like that on a ship."

"And ye won't on no other ship," said Old Salt. "I told ye — did n't I? — how Cap'n Bolin is always coddlin' of his crew and makin' a fuss about 'em? He likes 'em to have plenty of light an' air, so this is his idea of a port-hole."

The "porthole" was indeed very different from the little round ones on most ships. It was like a good-sized door laid down on its side with the hinges underneath. As Old Salt had lowered it, it lay flat, parallel with the surface of the water, though well above the reach of any except the very biggest waves. It was held in place by a stout chain at each end.

The children looked about the galley. Against one wall were a large range, fit to cook for the most fastidious eater, a table and a big refrigerator. Along the opposite wall were another table and several long shelves, crowded with all sorts of provisions in jars and cans. The children began to inspect these carefully.

"Orange marmalade!" cried Mildred.

"Peanut butter!" cried Tom.

"Strawberry jam!"

"Currant jelly!"

"Yes, yes," said Old Salt. "You won't find none of the delicacies missing. Ain't ye hungry after all our work? I am! Let's have a snack."

When they stopped to think of it, the children found themselves very hungry, indeed. So they opened a pot of anchovies and a jar of currant jelly, spreading them together on great slices of rye bread and washing it all down with cold tea that was standing in a big pot on the range. That's not exactly the sort of midnight lunch your papa and mamma would give you, is it? But it did n't seem to hurt them any.

Mildred had scarcely bitten off her first mouthful when a thought struck her.

"Oh!" she cried. "What has become of

that poor man who jumped overboard? Is he drowning?"

"If he is, he's finished it by this time," said Old Salt dryly. "But don't you worry, Mildred. He's too good for drownin'. They're savin' him for hangin'! I'll bet he's back on board already." He glanced out of the window. "There he comes now!" he whispered.

The children crowded to look out. Sure enough, there was poor Ben stealing up the forward ladder, dripping like a fish just caught. Mildred felt sorry for him, but she had to laugh and the others joined in, taking care to do it noiselessly, however. Scarcely had they returned to their lunch, when they heard a great knocking on the door of the wharf.

"That'll be Cap'n Bolin," said Old Salt. "Well, he'll have to knock hard to-night!"

"Has n't he got a key?" asked Tom.

"Not he," Old Salt answered. "There's never no key except Jim's an' ye seen me heave thet into the harbor."

"Then he can't get in," remarked Mildred.

"Oh, yes, he can," said Old Salt. "He's no fool, Cap'n Bolin ain't! Fust along he had to give up sailin' three or four times, but as soon

as he found it wuz a reg'lar habit of mine, heavin' Jim and his key into the harbor, he fixed up somethin' to beat it. You jest wait a minute."

The knock was repeated twice or thrice, each time louder. Then there was a pause. Cap'n Bolin, it seemed, had decided Jim was not on the wharf. Soon they heard the noise of something being placed against the high fence.

"He's got his ladder," said Old Salt. "Keeps it across the street jest fer times like this."

In a moment Cap'n Bolin's head appeared above the fence.

"Dear me, how annoying!" said he.

"He does n't talk much like sea-captains in the books," remarked Tom.

"Him!" ejaculated Old Salt scornfully. "Him! — he's the most ladylike sailor what ever trod a quarter-deck!"

"Most annoying, indeed!" said Cap'n Bolin, as he began to clamber down the inside of the fence.

He dropped onto the wharf, crossed to the ship and mounted the stern ladder. Our friends could not see him, but they could hear all he said.

"Well, well," he remarked. "I suppose it's time to get away for another voyage. I do hope this will be more prosperous than the last."

"What lovely language!" said Mildred.

"Huh!" snorted Old Salt.

"Yes, yes, I sincerely trust the Fates will be more propitious this time," went on Cap'n Bolin.

"High-class words, them — eh?" interjected Old Salt.

"Forecastle ahoy!" It was Cap'n Bolin shouting for the crew, but even his shouts were delivered in a most gentlemanly tone. Our friends heard the noise of the men going slowly on deck.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Cap'n Bolin. "You seem quite wet, Ben; I do hope you have n't taken cold!"

"Oh, no, Cap'n," answered Ben. "I'm all right. Just took a little swim, the night was so fine and warm."

"Oh, very well," said Cap'n Bolin. "The next time, however, it might be well to remove your clothing beforehand. By the way, where's the mate?"

"Ain't come aboard yet," answered Ben.

"How disappointing!" murmured the Cap'n.

"I'm afraid we shall have to leave without him. And the cook?"

"He's below."

"Then that's all right. We'll get under way at once. Would you mind hoisting the foresail, Ben and George?"

"Sorry, Cap'n," answered Ben. "I sprained my wrist climbing back onto the ladder arter my swim, and it'll hurt very bad if I have to pull a rope."

Old Salt groaned.

"And you, George?"

"That's George Golly — a mean man if there ever was one," said Old Salt aside to the children.

"Now, Cap'n, I ain't feelin' over an' above well this evenin'. I think it must be that cold salmon Cookie giv' us fer supper."

"I'd 'salmon' him!" growled Old Salt under his breath.

"And you, Jake?" inquired Cap'n Bolin. "You will help me hoist the foresail?"

"Jake Jimpson — another lubberly lummux!" muttered Old Salt.

"Ye see, Cap'n, I'd like to help ye first-rate," answered Jake, "but that salmon did just the same fer me as fer George."

"Too bad, too bad!" said the Cap'n. "I suppose the cook is asleep?"

"Yes," replied Jake.

"Then we can't disturb *him*," said the Cap'n. "He might treat us to bad meals to-morrow. Well, I shall have to try and hoist it alone, though it's quite heavy."

This was too much for Old Salt. He fell back on the galley bench and the groan he emitted this time was no make-believe one, though it was twice as loud and terrifying as the one with which he had frightened the sailors before.

"Did I hear something?" asked Cap'n Bolin.

"Oh, no, sir!" answered Ben, his voice trembling. "I'm sure you did n't, sir. I did n't hear nothin'. Did you, George?"

"No, indeed!" said George.

"Nor me neither," added Jake.

There were shuffling footsteps on deck. Tom stuck his head out of the window and saw the three sailors at the rail, glancing fearfully down at the wharf.

"Them ghosts ag'in!" exclaimed Ben in a hoarse whisper.

'They're on the wharf, sure," said George.

"Let's get away as soon as we can," said Jake.

"That's the ticket," agreed Ben. "Cap'n, my wrist's feelin' much better now. I'll give ye a hand with the foresail."

"Thank you, my fine fellow," said Cap'n Bolin.

"No, no," said Jake. "I'll help Ben with the foresail. You cast off forward, George, and p'r'aps the Cap'n will be so kind as to cast off astern and take the wheel."

"All right," said George.

"Thank you! Thank you, one and all, my good men," said Cap'n Bolin. "It's a real pleasure to have splendid fellows like you for a crew."

In a moment our friends heard the tackle creak as the foresail was hoisted, and in another moment the wharf began slowly to move away from them. At least that was the way it looked, though of course it was only the ship moving away from the wharf. Old Salt had quite recovered by this time and he sprang up with a muffled "Hurrah!"

"We're off now," he cried, "and as there's nothin' to be done before daylight, I move we all turn in for a catnap. Past midnight and

high time long ago fer you youngsters to be asleep!"

"But where are the beds?" asked Mildred, anxiously looking about for them.

"I'll have that fixed in a jiffy," answered the old sailor, diving into a locker (what we would call a cupboard ashore, my dears) and pulling out half-a-dozen red tablecloths. In the twinkling of an eye he had swept all the pots and cans off one of the shelves onto a table and spread out several of the tablecloths on the empty board.

"There," said he, "there's a fine, cozy bunk, Missy," and he lifted Mildred into it. (Bunk, by the way, my dears, is the ship word for bed.) "Here's a fine soft piller fer ye," he added, sticking a huge loaf of fresh baked bread under her head.

Tom he fixed up in the same way on the galley bench, which was luckily quite broad enough.

"But where are you going to sleep?" asked Tom, as he lay down.

"Don't you worry about me," answered Old Salt. "I got a fine open-air sleepin'-porch all to myself, good fer anything what ails ye, so the doctors say."

He crawled out the window and curled up comfortably on the broad shelf over the water about which I have told you, folding up his coat to make a pillow.

The little waves, lapping gently against the bow as the schooner moved slowly ahead, sang a soothing lullaby. Before you could say "Jack Robinson" they were all fast asleep.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE VOYAGE

It seemed to Mildred and Tom as if their eyes had not been closed a minute — and, as a matter of fact, it probably was n't much more than five minutes — when they were startled out of their sleep by a shout and a great splash. They both jumped up and rushed to the window. Old Salt had disappeared. The chains which held his shelf had been broken or cut through; it hung down below the window on its hinges, flat against the side of the ship.

"Oh!" cried Mildred, "Old Salt's fallen into the water! He'll be drowned and we'll be left all alone! Oh, dear, oh, dear! What *shall* we do? What *shall* we do?" She began to cry.

Tom patted her shoulder to comfort her.

"We're all right," said he bravely. "He won't be drowned. He's too old a water-dog for that. He can swim like a dozen fishes. There he is now!"

He pointed to where a head was visible, black on the water in the moonlight, quite a distance from the ship. The owner of the head

was making off toward the distant shore with vigorous strokes. As they watched, he turned toward the ship and raised himself as far out of water as he could.

"I ought n't!" he shouted.

"It's Jim!" exclaimed Mildred.

A voice close beneath them shouted back: "You ought!"

"Old Salt!" cried Tom. "Hurrah! I told you he'd be all right."

"Ought n't!" bawled Jim from the distance.

"Ought!"

The children looked down, but they could not discover Old Salt in the darkness, though they were sure it was his voice.

"How extraordinary!" came in Cap'n Bolin's placid voice from above. "All this shouting way out here at the mouth of the harbor this time of night! Ben, my trusty watchman, did you hear that noise? What does it all mean?"

The children looked up and saw Ben above them, leaning over the rail to scan the water.

"Why, yes, sir," he answered. "I heerd it all. Some one yells 'ought n't' and then some one else yells 'ought'; but I don't rightly know — "

He stopped short, for a fearful, gruesome groan came from somewhere below.

"No, no!" he cried, running away from the rail. "No, sir; I did n't hear nothin'! Oh, sir —" and they could hear him plump down on his knees at Cap'n Bolin's feet — "it's ghosts, that's what it is. We heard 'em on the wharf before we left. Oh, Cap'n — dear Cap'n! If you love us, me an' George an' Jake, change the course an' get away from here!"

"There, there, Ben, my lad," answered Cap'n Bolin soothingly, "I'm quite sure it is n't ghosts. My books tell me ghosts went out of fashion long ago. No real gentleman will recognize a ghost to-day. But if it will reassure you men, I don't mind changing the course a bit. I'm sure it's quite agreeable to me whether we go to one place or another."

There was a creaking as he threw the wheel over. (The wheel, my dears, if I forgot to tell you before, is what you steer a ship with.)

"Psst!" came Old Salt's voice from below, with a strong hiss. "It's all right! I'll be with ye in a minute!"

Soon they saw him stealing up the ladder. As he came near the window he swung in under it and thrust up one of his huge hands. The

children grasped it, and, with a mighty heave that taxed all their strength, managed to pull him through into the galley, though it was a hard job.

"Thank ye, my dears," said Old Salt, as soon as he stood safely within once more, "and God bless ye! I'm glad to be here ag'in. Confound the hide of thet pesterful Jim! Do ye know what he done? Swum back to his wharf and stole aboard just as we left. Then as soon as we were pretty well out of the harbor, he pulled a pair o' pincers out of his pocket, twisted off the chains and let me drop kerplunk inter the water!"

"How did you come along with the ship instead of having to swim ashore as he did?" inquired Tom.

"That was jest luck," answered Old Salt. "I threw my hands up when I struck the water an' had the good luck to grab the foot of the midship ladder as it went over my head. You jest bet I hung on like grim death! No matter, though — wait till the next time I ketch that scoundrel on his wharf! I'll pitch him so fur inter the harbor he never *can* swim back! Now, then, bundle inter yer bunks ag'in. As soon as ye're asleep I'll change my clothes,

mend them chains, and have a good night's rest in spite of that rascally Jim." So Mildred and Tom went back to bed and were fast asleep in a moment.

. . . . . .

Bang! bang! bang! Somebody knocking on the door.

"Yes, Nursie," said Mildred, still more than half asleep, turning over in her bunk.

"All right, Mother," said Tom, doing just as Mildred had done.

Bang! bang! bang! once more.

This time they were thoroughly wakened. They both sat up at the same moment. Through the big window the sun was shining brightly into the galley. Somebody was pounding very hard on the locked door.

"Hey, Cookie, you lazy scoundrel!" cried Jake from outside. "What about breakfast?"

"Come on now, Cookie!" cried George. "We're starving."

"All right, boys," answered the cook in a voice that sounded peculiarly familiar to Mildred and Tom. "Hold hard! I'll be with you in half an hour."

"Half an hour!" cried Ben indignantly. "You're an hour late as it is. Open that door!"

"Nothin' doin'," answered the cook. "Run away now an' be patient."

The men moved away, muttering and growling. "What's the matter with Cookie's voice?" asked one of them. "It don't sound nateral."

Cookie was busy at the range, standing with his back to the children. He had on blue overalls, a great white apron over them, and a white cap, with a broad, flat top. In a minute he turned with a chuckle to put the coffee-pot on the table. How the children stared, for it was no other than Old Salt himself!

"Good-mornin', my dears," said he, laughing heartily to see their eyes pop out of their heads in astonishment. "Got my clothes soakin' wet last night, of course, an' all I could find was this outfit of Cookie's. What's more, I don't believe Cookie is aboard at all, for he ain't tried to get into the galley this mornin'. Come on now — fall to! There's coffee an' bacon an' eggs an' fine bread an' butter, a breakfast for a king!"

They gathered around the table and fell to with a will. Her first hunger appeased, tender-hearted Mildred began to think of others.

"What about the poor, starving sailors?"

she asked, her mouth full of bread and jam. "I suppose you'll cook for them too?"

"Me!" exclaimed Old Salt. "Me! Cook for them rapscallions! No, Missy, I'm an able seaman, I am. I ain't no cook, except fer myself an' them I like."

"But they said they were starving," said Tom.

"Do 'em good, the gluttons!" commented Old Salt.

"Yes," said Mildred. "But if the cook's not here, who will feed us?"

"Ain't this breakfast all right?" demanded Old Salt. "Don't you worry about the eats, Missy. Have another egg, Tom. Say, Mildred, can't *you* cook?"

"No," answered Mildred truthfully; "at least, not very well. I can boil an egg, though — that is, if I have a sand glass to tell how long."

"Well," said Old Salt, "thet's a good beginnin' anyhow."

Just then there came a gentle rap on the door.

"Who's there?" cried Old Salt in his disguised voice.

"I, Cook," answered Cap'n Bolin's soft voice. (Remember, he spoke very grammati-

cally; most sailors — and perhaps some of us — would have said "Me.") "Let me in, please."

"All right, sir," answered Old Salt, rising to unbolt the door. It opened inward, and, as he pulled it open, he stepped in behind it so that the Cap'n could not see him as he entered. Cap'n Bolin came in a step or two and then stood stock-still, his mouth wide open and his eyes staring.

"What? — who? — where am I?" he stammered. "Is this ship an orphan asylum?"

He stared at the children as if they were some strange kind of animal he had never seen before.

Old Salt shut the door, bolted it, and came forward chuckling.

"Good-mornin', Cap'n Bolin," said he.

The Cap'n whirled about and stared at him with equal astonishment.

"For goodness' sake, Old Bill Salt!" he exclaimed. "What are you doing here?"

"I'm a stowaway," answered Old Salt pleasantly. "So is Mildred. So is Tom."

"Oh, dear, oh, dear!" exclaimed the Cap'n. "What shall I do? In all my sailing I never had a stowaway on one of my ships before!"

"Worse luck you!" answered Old Salt. "The best thing you can do is to sit down an' have some breakfast with us an' then we can talk things over. Here's a fine cup of coffee, sir."

The Cap'n was still dazed from his surprise. He sat down and began to eat and drink mechanically.

"Who made this coffee?" he asked, tasting it.

"I did," answered Old Salt.

"*You* did!" cried Cap'n Bolin, jumping up. "Then where's my cook?"

"I guess he stayed ashore along of your mate," replied Old Salt. "I ain't seen nothin' of either of 'em."

"Dear, dear, dear!" said the Cap'n, bursting into tears. "What *shall* I do? No mate and no cook and a crew about which I'm beginning to have my doubts."

"There, there, Cap'n," said Old Salt, patting him gently on the back and putting the coffee-cup into his hand again. "Don't take on so. Why not sign us on? We're three very able-bodied folks."

"You!" exclaimed the Cap'n.

" Yes — why not? I'll be mate, Mildred'll

be cook, and Tom can be sort of a supernumerary quartermaster an' give us a hand on deck or below here just as needs be."

"Cook!" cried Mildred. "I just told you I can't — "

"Quartermaster!" exclaimed Tom. "What is a quarter — "

Old Salt frowned and then gave them a great big wink. They stopped abruptly.

Cap'n Bolin knitted his brows in thought. "I'll do it," said he, with unusual decision, and he drank off a fresh cup of coffee at one gulp to emphasize his words.

"Hurrah!" cried Old Salt. "I'm mate of the Dove now. You folks git out of this galley an' let me put my proper clothes on. They're dry by this time."

In two minutes he was ready and hurried up on deck ahead of them. Ben was at the wheel, holding it carelessly with one hand and hanging onto his empty stomach with the other. George and Jake were sitting on the skylight of the after cabin, also hugging their empty places and looking as woe-begone as possible.

"Gimme that wheel!" cried Old Salt, striding up to Ben and making his high voice

sound as gruff as possible. "I'm mate of this here ship now!"

Ben gripped the wheel firmly with both hands. "Old Bill Salt!" he exclaimed. "Mate! You, mate! Aw, go on!"

"I'll soon show ye who's mate," cried Old Salt, stripping off his jersey.

Ben did not like the fire in his eye.

"Is thet so, Cap'n?" he demanded of Cap'n Bolin.

"No need of askin' *him*," said Old Salt. "What I tell ye goes. Here, gimme that wheel!" He tore the spokes out of Ben's hands. "An' what's more," he went on, pointing first to Mildred and then to Tom, "there's the new cook and the new quartermaster. Now stir yer pins out of here, ye lubbers. Go down to the galley. There's enough left to feed big, lazy hulks like you. When ye're through, wash the dishes and clean up the galley spick an' span — an' mind ye're all back on deck in not one minute over a quarter of an hour!"

Dazed by Old Salt's sudden attack, the three sailors went slowly forward and disappeared below.

"Now, Cap'n Bolin," said Old Salt cheer-

fully, "would you mind takin' the wheel a few minutes? Yes, I know you've been steerin' all night, but I'll just git things a bit shipshape an' take my trick again as soon as those loafers come up from breakfast."

Cap'n Bolin took the wheel and Old Salt cast a disparaging look at the untidy confusion on the deck.

"Come on now, Quartermaster!" he cried. "Lend a hand. We'll have things straightened out in a jiffy."

Tom was glad to have something real to do and proud of his new title, though he did n't know just what it meant. Old Salt showed him how to coil neatly the ends of the ropes which the slatternly sailors had left lying about every which way. When they were all carefully coiled down, they hauled up the staysail, for though there was nothing more than a fair sailing breeze the schooner had been running under mainsail, foresail, and jib only. (The jib, my dears, is the three-cornered sail next in front of the foremast and the staysail the other one still farther forward.) By the time they had finished, the men came on deck again, not a minute later than the end of the quarter-hour Old Salt had

allowed them. The new mate relieved the Cap'n at the wheel.

"Now, Cap'n," said he, "you go below an' have a good snooze. I'll look out for things here. What's the course?" (The course, my dears, is the name of the point of the compass toward which the ship is sailing.)

"Oh, I don't care," answered the Cap'n. "Any course you like."

That's a funny answer for the captain of a ship to make, is n't it? Mildred and Tom both thought so — and they were right. But it just suited Old Salt, for it left him free to go looking for Belinda wherever he liked and at the same time he did not have to tell Cap'n Bolin that they were really out on a quest. He was afraid if the Cap'n knew he would object to having his schooner hunting around for anything so small as a doll.

"All right, Cap'n," he answered quickly. "What is this — a fishin' trip or a tradin' voyage?"

"It makes no difference to me," replied Cap'n Bolin again.

"Well, suppose we call it a tradin' voyage. There must be some islands around here som'eres with people on 'em we could dicker

with." (Just notice how craftily Old Salt went about having his own way without letting the Cap'n know anything about Belinda.)

"All right. It makes no difference to me," repeated Cap'n Bolin. "There's a nice island over sou'-sou'west of us somewhere."

"Good," answered Old Salt. "We'll go there first, anyway. I s'pose there's some people on it?"

"I suppose so," assented Cap'n Bolin. "That is, if they have n't moved away since last time I was there. Ho, hum!" — he yawned loudly and stretched himself — "I'm going to turn in." And below he went.

Old Salt threw the wheel over to put the Dove on the south-southwest course Cap'n Bolin had given him. As soon as they had squared away in the new direction, he called the sailors aft and lined them up before him.

"Now listen, ye red-headed loafers," he said, though none of them had red hair as far as Mildred or Tom could see. "Ye'd all be good enough sailors if ye wa'n't so tarnation lazy. Now me an' Old Man Lazy can't live on the same ship — understand?"

"Aye, aye," answered Big Ben.

"Aye, aye, *what?*" shouted Old Salt in his fiercest tone.

"Aye, aye, *sir*," said Ben promptly.

"Did ye eat everything what was left from breakfast?" asked Old Salt.

"That we did, sir," replied George. "Every last crumb an' looked for more."

"An' did ye wash the dishes arterward an' sweep the galley?"

"Aye, aye, sir," answered Jake.

"All right, then, I've made everything shipshape fer ye on deck an' I expect ye to keep it so. Understand?"

"Aye, aye, sir," answered the crew in chorus.

"Good. You, Ben, take the wheel. George has deck watch and you can go below for a while, Jake. Quartermaster," he continued, turning to Tom, "your duty is to stay here an' see that the needle of this here compass keeps a-pointin' sou'-sou'west, as it is now. Remember, if Ben lets that needle fall off half a point in either direction, you come an' tell me at once. I'll larn him to steer!" He took Mildred by the hand and led her below to the galley, while Tom proudly took his station by the compass.

CHAPTER SIX

A COOKING LESSON AND AN EXCITING AFFAIR

"WELL, Mildred," said Old Salt, when they were seated on the galley bench, "are you havin' a good time?"

"Yes, indeed!" answered Mildred, smiling brightly at him. "It's the first time I've ever been for a sail in a big ship. The air and the sun and the wind are lovely. Do you think we'll find the island with Belinda on it?"

"As fer that," replied Old Salt, "only time will tell. Just now we got to think of cookin' dinner fer everybody. You're the cook."

"I know I am," said Mildred, "but I'm afraid I can't."

"Of course you can," replied Old Salt. "I'll show ye. It's very simple. Boiled beef and taters is the menu to-day." (He called it "mean you.") "In fact, boiled beef an' taters is the menu most of the time fer sailors, so that's about all ye have to learn — that and coffee."

"Is it very hard?" asked Mildred anxiously.

"Ho, no!" said the mate. "You take this

here big iron pot, fill it with water from the barrel, an' put it on the stove — or somebody does it fer ye. I'm afraid it's rather big fer a little girl to manage. Then ye put this here hunk of beef in it an' boil until done."

"How do I know when it's done?" she asked.

"After it's boiled a goodish bit of a while," answered her instructor, "ye keep spudgin' it with yer finger, an' when it feels soft enough so a feller could eat it without doin' no violence to his teeth or his jawbone, why, then it's done. Same with the taters. When the beef's been boilin' a while, ye wash 'em off an' stick 'em in the pot too. By an' by ye'll find ye can stick a fork into 'em without strainin' yer wrist — an' then they're ready."

"That does n't seem hard," said Mildred. "I think I can do that all right. But don't you burn your finger spudging the beef?"

"A reg'lar ship's cook don't," answered Old Salt, "but p'r'aps you might, seein' yer fingers is so young an' tender. You'd better spudge it with — lemme see — with, with — I know! with one of them hairpins!"

"Hurrah!" cried Mildred, clapping her hands. "I knew we'd find some use for them.

That's all, is n't it? Oh, no," she corrected herself. "You have n't told me how to make coffee."

"Oh, that's easiest of all," said the mate. "Ye jest take two handfuls of coffee an' one of sawdust, so it won't be too strong — strong coffee is bad fer sailors' nerves, ye know — an' throw 'em into the pot. Then ye fill it up with water an' let it boil till it looks like the color of the inside of my old pipe. That's all."

"Thank you so much for telling me," said Mildred politely. "I think I'll be able to get dinner after all. It does n't sound so difficult."

"That it ain't," said Old Salt, "an' you'd better begin at once. Them loafers would do nothin' but stuff themselves all day long if anybody'd cook for 'em. They got appetites like a camel, what can eat an' drink enough in one day to last him fer a week. The only difference is them sailors can't eat an' drink enough in a week ter last 'em fer one day."

Mildred did just as she had been told, with the result that everything came out beautifully. Beef, potatoes, and coffee were just perfect, declared the men. Mildred thought to herself that they must have put up with

very poor cooking before if they praised her first attempt so much, but she said nothing.

Old Salt took the wheel again while the crew was eating. Tom ate with them, so that he could return to his post by the compass afterward. When they had finished, the mate joined Mildred in the galley. He made a fine omelet, and on that and many good things from the cans and jars, he and Mildred had a much finer meal than the others had enjoyed.

The sun kept on shining, the pleasant breeze blowing, and the Dove quietly sailing along all the afternoon. When Old Salt's trick at the wheel came, he taught Tom a lot about how to steer. Tom was a bright boy and learned very quickly. It made him proud and happy to be treated like a man and he felt quite grown up. At six Mildred prepared supper for the crew — baked beans and coffee. As the beans came out of a great can, all she had to do was to heat them, which she did not find at all difficult. After supper — again they had better things than the crew — Mildred and Tom went to bed at once, for they were very tired. During the afternoon Old Salt had ordered the crew to clean out the cook's cabin. It was clean and neat as a new pin. Mildred had it

all to herself and thought it much nicer than sleeping on the galley shelf. Tom got the second mate's cabin, as there was no second mate aboard this voyage. This had also been cleaned and Old Salt painted "Quartermaster" on the door in neat black letters. Tom was proud enough to burst, so proud, in fact, that he lay awake for a long time, doing nothing except being proud of himself. Finally he too dropped off to sleep — but not for long.

He was awakened by some one shaking him sharply. "What is it? What is it?" he cried, struggling to sit up in his bunk.

"Sh! Easy, boy!" said Old Salt in a hoarse whisper, for it was he. "Put on yer clothes an' come on deck quick, I need ye."

Tom did as he was bid. A glance at the clock in the companionway showed him it was only half-past nine. On deck the moon was shining brightly. The breeze held steadily over the port quarter, as it had all the afternoon, and the Dove walked along daintily. Old Salt was at the wheel. There was no one else to be seen.

"Come here, Tom," said he. "Take the wheel an' hold her steady fer a while. I got a bit of paintin' to do."

"Painting?" said Tom, astonished. "Is n't this a funny time of day to be painting?"

"There's just a little strip here under the leeward rail that needs attention."

"Which is the leeward rail?" asked Tom. (Lew-ard is the way the sailors say it, my dears.)

"Side of the ship toward the wind is always windward an' t'other side leeward," answered Old Salt, taking up a pot and brush and going down on his knees close to the starboard rail. ("Starboard," by the way, is what a sailor says instead of "right"; and "port" instead of "left.") He worked hard for ten minutes or so, painting a strip two or three feet wide from about opposite the wheel all the way back to the stern.

"There," said he, "that's done. Be careful you don't step on it. Now, Tom, I want you to get into the dory I got here at the foot of the starn ladder."

"What!" exclaimed Tom. "You're going to set me adrift!"

"Don't be scairt," answered Old Salt, laughing. "I need ye too much fer that. I'm goin' to let you out about fifty feet astern on a line. Jest keep yer eyes open an' mind ye

don't go to sleep ag'in. There's a fine long boathook in the dory. All I want of you is this: when ye see suthin' goin' by in the water, fish it out with that 'ere boathook. Understand?"

"Yes," answered Tom. "But why —?"

"Ask me no questions an' I'll tell ye no lies," said Old Salt. "Remember, Tom, I'm your superior officer an' do jest as I say."

"Aye, aye, mate," replied Tom. "I'll do the best I can."

"No one can't ask no more," said Old Salt.

Tom ran down the ladder, and got into the dory. Old Salt, taking the line to the stern, paid it out until the dory was the proper distance away, then made it fast. The sea was so quiet that the little boat rocked hardly more than the schooner itself. No need to tell Tom to keep awake. He was on edge with the excitement and novelty of it all. For twenty minutes or more nothing unusual happened on the schooner's deck. Old Salt was at the wheel. Occasionally he turned to wave a friendly hand at Tom, who sat in the dory with the boathook in his hands, keeping a sharp outlook for whatever might go by on the water.

Then Cap'n Bolin came on deck. Tom could see Old Salt and the Cap'n talking together for a few moments, though he was too far away to hear what they said. Cap'n Bolin took the wheel and Old Salt went below. Another five minutes passed quietly. Then Tom noticed the three men of the crew. He wondered what all three of them were doing on deck at this hour, when only one should have been there and the other two fast asleep in their bunks. Jake engaged the Cap'n in conversation while George and Ben sneaked around behind him in a careless manner, as if they were merely going to the stern to watch the ship's wake in the moonlight. But Ben and George (as Cap'n Bolin should have known) were not the men to waste time on moonlight when they might have been snoring below in their bunks. They had more serious business on hand, so serious, indeed, that they did not even notice Tom in the dory.

All of a sudden Big Ben sprang on the Cap'n from behind, pinning his arms fast to his side, while Jake grabbed him from in front, and George, with some trouble, dragged a great potato sack down over his head.

"Help! Murder! Mutiny!" shouted the Cap'n, his voice muffled by the bag.

He struggled as best he could, but the men were too strong for him and hustled him over to the lee rail. Tom stood up in the dory in his excitement. He held the boathook ready, for he guessed now what it was to be used for. Though he was watching the struggling group intensely, he did not fail to notice with the corner of his eye that Old Salt slipped quietly out of the shadow of the mainmast and took the wheel.

"What!" thought Tom. "Is *he* in the plot, too?"

However, there was not much time for thinking. The three ruffians hoisted the struggling captain onto the rail and pushed him overboard. Splash! What a noise he made as, helpless, he hit the water. In a moment Tom's dory was close upon him. Now was the time for action! He thrust at the sack. Luckily the boathook caught fast. Tom twisted it round and round to make sure it would not loosen and drew the Cap'n to the side of the dory. With a little effort he was able to pull the sack off over the Cap'n's head. Cap'n Bolin seemed little the worse for his ducking.

He grasped the side of the dory and managed to climb in with Tom's help.

"Are you all right?" asked Tom anxiously, as the Cap'n sank into the bottom of the dory, out of breath with his exertions and the excitement; but before he could reply their attention was drawn by the noise Old Salt was making on the schooner. As the Cap'n went overboard, he had thrown the schooner's head into the wind, so that she lost her way ("slowed down" is what that means, my dears), and now he was dancing about in a clumsy hornpipe, his great feet pounding the deck with resounding whacks.

> Tee-did'-um, tee-di'-dum, tee-do'-dum, tee-diddle,
> Old Davy Jones is a-scrapin' of his fiddle.
> "Three bad men on the Cap'n's chest"
> Is the dandy tune he played the best.

"Heavens!" exclaimed the Cap'n, sitting up. "Is he crazy? Has the excitement turned his brain?"

"No, no!" cried Tom. "He's all right. Look at the men!"

It was truly a comical sight. All three of the crew were shouting savage words and shaking their fists at Old Salt; that is, as nearly at him as they could, for in order to

face toward him at all they had to twist their bodies around with horrible contortions. Some mysterious thing held their feet facing the rail, just in the position they had been when the Cap'n was pitched overboard.

"Hi, Old Salt, pull us in!" yelled Tom.

"Pull us in, mate!" yelled the Cap'n, quite forgetting his ducking in the new excitement.

But it was some time before Old Salt gave up his rejoicings and calmed down sufficiently to haul them up to the ladder. The Cap'n jumped out of the dory and rushed on deck, and when Tom and Old Salt joined him he was walking about the men regarding them with sad reproach in his eyes. It did not seem to make much of an impression on them. They were so close to the rail, facing it, that he could not get in front of them and reproachful glances directed only at a man's back are very apt to miss some of their effect.

"Ben," said he, "how could you?"

Ben grunted.

"George, I did n't expect anything like this from you!"

George grunted.

"Is that the right way to treat me, Jake, after all the years you have sailed with me?"

Jake grunted.

"Yes," commented Old Salt, "and had the easiest and laziest times of their lives, the rapscallions!"

"Say not so, William Salt," said the Cap'n. "'T is true, I hope, that I have not been harsh with my men. I have tried to treat them like fellow-sailors, with justice and moderation—"

"And this," interrupted Old Salt, "is the way they repay you. Rascals such as them don't understand no justice nor no moderation. They've just thought all the time ye wuz soft an' easy. Now that things looked different, they calc'lated to get rid of you fust an' then they would 'a' picked on me."

"No, no, Bill," protested the Cap'n. "You're too hard on them. They are good fellows at heart and were only misled by some evil impulse. Am I not right, Ben?" As he said this he stepped up close to the big sailor to pat him on the shoulder — and stuck fast. He tried to move his feet — but in vain.

"Hey — what sort of business is this?" he cried in astonishment. "What's the matter?"

"How do ye like yer new deck paint, Cap'n?" asked Old Salt, with a great laugh. "Triple,

copper-riveted fish glue — that's what I used. I'm afraid ye're due to spend the night there, along with those lazy lubbers ye're so fond of."

"No, no," said the Cap'n hastily. "Here, take hold — help me out!"

"Not unless ye promise one thing," said Old Salt.

"What's that?"

"To let them rascals — what seems to be enjoyin' the moonlight so much in a part of the ship where they don't belong — stay right where they are all night."

The three men growled terribly.

"Oh, I can't do that," said the Cap'n. "It's too cruel. They're in their bare feet and they will catch their deaths of cold."

"Well, that's better than catchin' their deaths of what they'd get from me if they was loose," said Old Salt dryly. "Will ye leave 'em there or not, Cap'n?"

"I can't!" replied the soft-hearted commander.

"Then good-night to ye, Cap'n!" said Old Salt, moving off forward. "We'll leave the four cronies to a pleasant evenin's conversation."

"No," cried the Cap'n in alarm. "Don't

leave me! I promise they shall stay. Pull me out!"

"That's talkin' now," cried Old Salt, turning back. "But pullin' ye out is easier said than done. Lemme see — I guess this will do it."

He took a spare rope which ran over a block at the masthead and made one end fast around the Cap'n's waist, then he and Tom manned the other end. "Heave ho!" he cried, and they both hauled in time as the big mate sang still another verse of his favorite song:

> Tee-did'-um, tee-di'-dum, tee-do'-dum, tee-diddle,
> Old Davy Jones is a-scrapin' of his fiddle.
> A good little girl sticks close to her mother,
> But old fish glue sticks closer than a brother.

Just at the last word the Cap'n tore loose and flew at least ten feet into the air, falling back upon the deck with a fearful thump.

"Oh, have you broken anything?" cried Tom anxiously.

"Nothin' but the Third Commandment," laughed Old Salt, as the Cap'n so far forgot himself as to mutter some words quite outside his usual refined vocabulary. "Come on to bed an' let him do what he pleases. We've certainly earned a good rest."

As they moved off forward, the Cap'n rose and took his place at the deserted wheel. They heard the sailors begin to talk to him in low tones.

"Good-night, Cap'n," called Old Salt as they reached the companionway. "Have a good talk with yer friends, but remember, if there ain't three of 'em still stuck fast when I come on deck in the mornin', there'll be four soon after. I'm a man of my word, I am!"

"Is that the proper way for a mate to talk to his captain?" asked Tom as they went below.

"Well, p'r'aps not," agreed Old Salt. "But then — I'm a most un-proper mate an' he's anything but a proper cap'n. Good-night, sleep tight!"

Tom paused a moment at his cabin door, thinking hard.

"I say," he called, "if you knew the men were going to throw the Cap'n overboard, why did n't you stop them beforehand, instead of all that funny business you arranged?"

Old Salt turned and looked at him with a funny grin. "Will a duck swim?" said he. Which does n't seem to answer Tom's question at all — does it?

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE FIRST ISLAND

BANG! It was Mildred's elbow that bumped against the wall of the cabin the next morning and waked her up. She scrambled out of her bunk and then promptly sat down — or fell down — upon it again. Mildred had been used all her life to a quiet, steady bedroom, but this one was decidedly movable — and moving! When she tried to stand up, she felt very peculiar in her head, just as you do after you have twirled around and around on one foot. It's all right, of course, to be dizzy when you've done it on purpose, but quite another thing when a movable bedroom is making you so and you can't stop it. Mildred was a brave little girl. She felt that, having been made cook, she was a regular officer of the ship. So, in spite of the wiggly floor, the wiggly dressing-table, and the wiggly everything else, she scrambled out of the bunk again, struggled into her clothes, and groped her way along the passage to the galley. The great window was open, though the schooner was dancing about

in a lively fashion on top of a chop created by a good, fresh breeze; so there was plenty of light in the galley and rather more air than necessary. She felt a little better, though she was quite content to sit down as steadily as she could on the galley bench, and really did n't see how she was going to get breakfast.

In a minute or two the door opened and in came Old Salt, leading a limp, bedraggled and white Tom by the arm.

"Good-mornin', Mildred," said he cheerily. "Feelin' a little googly this brisk mornin'? Come, Tom — brace up, my lad! Look at Mildred! She's only a girl, but she's twice as fresh as you are!"

Tom's pride was quite gone. It usually is when you are seasick. He groaned dismally and slid onto the floor in a heap.

"Well, well!" exclaimed Old Salt. "We'll have to find that little crate of limes. I'll just try one to show ye the best cure there is for a dizzy head on a choppy mornin'." He cut a lime in two and began to suck one half.

"Ooh! Pah! Woof!" he cried, as the sour taste wrinkled his lips and puckered his jaws. "Come on, Mildred, try it!"

"No, thank you," said Mildred, "I — I feel much better now."

"Did n't I tell ye 't was the finest thing in the world fer seasickness?" demanded Old Salt. "Ye feel better before ye've tried it at all. Just take a little suck an' ye'll be fine as a top."

"No, thank you. I'm quite all right again now. I really don't need any!" she protested, as Old Salt approached her with the other half of the lime.

"Do ye hear that, Tom?" said Old Salt. "Mildred is cured without even taking her medicine."

Tom's only answer was another doleful groan.

"Fer boys," went on Old Salt, "we have to fix the juice up with a little cayenne pepper and just a dash of ammonia. They need stronger medicine than girls."

He rummaged around on the shelves until he found the things he wanted and mixed his peculiar drink in a little glass.

"Come on, Tom," he cried when he had it ready. "Just a sip."

Another groan from Tom.

"It's fine, boy," he continued, pretending

to try it. "Just the thing to give ye a splendid appetite fer breakfast!"

"Don't want any breakfast!" groaned Tom.

"Oh, all right," said Old Salt; "but I take it unkind of ye not even tryin' my little drink arter all the trouble I had mixin' it fer ye. Jest one drop!"

"No!" said Tom, struggling to his knees.

"One little one!" persisted Old Salt.

"No!" said Tom again, dragging himself up with a firm grip on the table and moving so as to place it between Old Salt and himself.

"A wee bit fer my sake!" said Old Salt, walking around the table after him.

"No," answered Tom, keeping out of his reach.

"Ye must!" said Old Salt, firmly, increasing his pace.

"No!" Tom redoubled his efforts to keep ahead.

"Ye shall!" cried Old Salt, breaking into a sharp trot.

"I won't!" cried Tom, running in his turn.

Round and round the table they went at full tilt, Tom doing his level best, despite his weakness, to keep out of Old Salt's reach — and succeeding, too. Mildred burst out laugh-

ing at the clumsy antics of the big sailor. She laughed and laughed until the tears came, and she was so weak that she fell back onto the bench again. After they had circled about the table a dozen times or more, Old Salt threw himself down beside her and laughed, too, until it seemed as if his jaws would crack. Tom, panting, leaned red and indignant against the table. Like most boys, he did not relish being made fun of; but in a little while he was caught up by the laughter of the other two and had to join them.

"Ho, ho, ho! Ha, ha, ha!" roared Old Salt, his great cheeks red as berries and all puffed out. "What'd I tell ye about limes? Ain't they jest prime fer sea-sickness? Anybody that can leg it the way you did, Tom, ain't what I'd call *dangerously* ill. I tell ye — limes is the thing! Ain't they jest prime!"

"But it was n't the limes at all," protested Mildred. "Neither of us even tasted them!"

"What! Did n't ye now?" exclaimed Old Salt in pretended surprise. "Why — so ye did n't!"

"I know what made me all right again," said Mildred. "It was laughing so hard — was n't it, Tom?"

"Yes," agreed the boy. "I guess that's what fixed me too."

"Anyway," said Old Salt, "it was the limes what made ye laugh — was n't it? So I was right after all." He chuckled quietly. "An' jest remember — limes is good fer anything that ails ye, when there's an old fool like me around to give ye the right dose. There ain't many diseases, either of body or soul, that'll stand up ag'in' a real, good, old-fashioned fit of laughin'!" And during all the rest of the voyage, no matter how jumpy the sea, if either Tom or Mildred felt a bit queer, all Old Salt had to do was to exclaim "Limes!" or simply to reach for the crate. The remembrance of that comic scene in the galley made them burst out laughing and they were cured at once.

All three helping, breakfast was soon ready. Old Salt allowed the children a good, strong cup of coffee apiece, which cleared up any lingering traces of seasickness the limes had not driven away. Then they went on deck. Poor Cap'n Bolin was still at the wheel, though half asleep, for Old Salt had not taken pity on him and he had been obliged to remain on duty all night. His three friends, the rascally sailors, were still fast in their tracks. You can

imagine how tired they were, so tired, indeed, that they had all gone to sleep standing up. As soon as they really slept each man lost his balance, of course, and doubled up like a jack-knife. There they hung, all three, each with his head hanging down close to his feet. Mildred thought the poor chaps must be ill, they looked so uncomfortable, and was sorry for them, but Tom saw at once what was the matter with them.

"Good-mornin', Cap'n Bolin," said Old Salt.

The Cap'n, more than half asleep, had not noticed them come on deck. At the sound of Old Salt's voice he turned and stared at them blankly, blinking his eyes in a dazed fashion. Then he suddenly said, "Good-morning, mate," let go of the wheel and fell in a heap on the deck, as fast asleep as his crew. Neither punches, prods, nor shouts could wake him. He slept peacefully on even when Mildred blew up a big paper bag and burst it close to his ear. So Tom and Old Salt tied his hands and feet in front of him with a piece of stout cord, and, while Old Salt took the wheel, Tom stood the unconscious captain on edge, trundled him up the deck like a hoop, and let him roll down the stairs. Reaching the lower deck,

the Cap'n rolled round and round in smaller and smaller circles, just as your hoop does when it is "dying," and finally flopped over on one side, still fast asleep.

When Tom returned to the deck he found Mildred and Old Salt gazing intently ahead and a little to starboard.

"Do you see it, Tom?" cried Mildred excitedly. "Look!"

"See what?" demanded Tom. "That little black speck way off on the horizon?"

"Yes, that's it," said Old Salt.

"That's *what?*" asked Tom.

"The island, of course," answered Mildred. "That's where Belinda is."

"Oh, Belinda!" exclaimed Tom. "I'd forgotten all about her!"

"Well, *I* had n't!" cried Mildred indignantly.

"What island is it?" asked Tom.

"How should I know?" replied Old Salt. "Anyway, it's the one we're steerin' fer. It'll be a couple of hours yet afore we git thar."

"And how do you know Belinda's there?" Tom demanded of Mildred.

"Of course she is," answered the girl. "She

is n't here, is she? And she is n't at home. So she must be there!"

This peculiar way of reasoning by no means convinced Tom — but you know what it is, arguing with a girl! Old Salt was busy thinking.

"Now, Tom," said he, "you'll have to help me pry those rascals loose. I'll need 'em to help take in sail an' drop the anchor when we make the island."

Luckily each sailor had on a stout leather belt to hold up his trousers. They took the same rope they had used the evening before to free the Cap'n and made the end of it fast in Big Ben's belt first, he being the heaviest and hardest to move. All three of them tugged for all they were worth on the other end, and, after two or three strong heaves all together, managed to tear him away from the grip of the glue. He hung there a foot or two off the deck — like a V upside down — but do you think he woke up? Not he!

"He suttinly is a good, steady sleeper," commented Old Salt. "Well — we'll have to invent a newfangled alarm clock fer him. Pull him up about fifteen feet an' then we'll all let go together. P'r'aps it'll stir him a bit when he strikes the deck."

They hauled him up into the air with a will, but just as they were about to let go something woke him. He gave one terrified glance about and let out a truly blood-curdling yell.

"Help! Murder! Fire! Thieves!" roared Big Ben.

Alas, it did him no good. Our three friends burst out laughing so hard at the comical picture he made that they all let go of the rope and he landed on the deck with an awful bump. He scrambled to his feet and ran forward as fast as he could, the rope still fast to his belt. Tom had the presence of mind to take a quick turn about a handy post with the other end and when it tightened poor Ben got another bad fall on the deck. This time he was thoroughly cowed and lay still until Old Salt and Tom freed him, when he slunk off to the forecastle.

George and Jake were pulled loose in the same way. Neither of them slept as soundly as Ben and, except for one yell of protest as the strain on the rope awoke them, they behaved quietly as lambs and slunk away to the forecastle as Ben had done.

"There now," exclaimed Old Salt as he re-

turned to his post at the wheel, "I rather guess those poor fellers has learned a lesson. They'll be tame as turtles the rest of this voyage an' do everything I tell 'em, or my name is n't Old Salt."

In another hour or so they drew close to the island. It was not very large and seemed to be nearly circular in shape, sloping up all around to a hill in the center. Though the shores were rocky, the whole island was covered with trees of a peculiar green. Only the very top of the hill was bare and on it they could see a little house with a flag.

"I don't see any harbor," said Old Salt. "We'll have to coast along until we find an openin' of some sort. Can't anchor out here in the open ocean. A storm might come up any moment an' drive the Dove ashore."

"What's that white thing on the big rock there?" asked Mildred, who had sharper eyes than either Tom or Old Salt. "It looks like a signpost."

"It sure enough does," agreed Old Salt. He turned the Cap'n's glasses on the object and then dropped them in surprise. "Why!" he exclaimed, "I'll be ding-swizzled if it ain't a man!"

The children looked through the glasses in turn, Tom, with unexpectedly good manners, remembering just in time to offer them to Mildred first.

"It *is* a man!" she cried.

"And what a man!" cried Tom. "He must be three yards tall at the very least."

It was indeed a man, very tall and very thin, clad all in white. He stood there stiff as a ramrod, one arm at his side and the other stuck out stiff and straight, pointing along the coast in the direction the schooner was sailing. As they watched he dropped the arm, ran nimbly along the shore for a few hundred feet, jumping from rock to rock with the agility of a goat, and then stood stock-still once more, pointing again in the same direction. As Mildred had said, he looked like nothing so much as an animated signpost.

"Some clever chap, that!" exclaimed Old Salt. "He's just like a setter dog a-pointin' quail."

"He must be showing us where the harbor is," said Tom.

"That's what he's doin'," agreed Old Salt, "and he's better than a whole raft of buoys and lighthouses." He chuckled to himself

and then burst out with another verse of his favorite song:

Tee-did'-um, tee-di'-dum, tee-do'-dum, tee-diddle,
Ol' Davy Jones is a-scrapin' of his fiddle.
Up and down and high and low,
A-pointin' the way with his old bow.

"Cut that chap up into sections an' he would n't make bad fiddle-bows for Davy — would he?" said he, and laughed at his own quaint idea.

The lengthy stranger continued to run along the shore, pausing every little while to make a living signpost of himself, while Old Salt steered the Dove along parallel to him. After half an hour or so they saw him climb up on an extra large rock. This time, instead of extending his arm straight out, he held it pointed downward in a slanting direction in front of him.

"What does he mean?" asked Mildred.

"Don't see no openin' there — do you, Tom?" asked Old Salt.

"No — but I think there must be one," answered the boy.

"Yes — thar she opens up!" cried the mate, eagerly scanning the coast as the Dove forged ahead. "It ain't very wide, but it looks deep

enough. Anyway, we'll chance it. Call the men, Tom. We'll need 'em in a minute."

As they came abreast of the man in white they found, as they expected, that the great boulder on which he stood marked one side of an opening between the rocks. It proved to be large enough to admit ten ships the size of the Dove. Old Salt, putting the wheel down, made smartly for the entrance and the schooner was soon safe inside of a pretty, land-locked harbor of good size, as safe a place for a boat to lie as there is in this world. The men, thoroughly cowed by their experience of the night before, had come on deck without a murmur when Tom called them. They lowered the sails and let go the anchor at the mate's command and the schooner lay as quietly as if on the bosom of a mill pond.

"All ashore what's goin' ashore!" cried Old Salt.

"What about Cap'n Bolin?" inquired Tom.

"And what about us?" demanded Big Ben.

"You!" cried Old Salt, turning on him. "Shore leave for you lubbers arter the scoundrelly way ye behaved last night! Not much! Stay aboard and think over yer sins, all of ye!"

The Cap'n proved to be so sound asleep it was quite impossible to wake him. They cut the cords which bound him, so that he could sleep more comfortably, and left him where he was. Then they got into the gig and started for shore, Tom and Old Salt rowing and Mildred sitting in the stern, just as if she were the captain. You may imagine how important she felt, especially as the tall man in white was waiting on the beach to greet them. As they drew near, he stood on the white sand at the very edge of the water and bowed repeatedly as low as he could. It was a comical sight, his long, thin body — for he really was, as Tom had guessed, almost nine feet tall — doubling up each time so that he looked like an animated nutcracker. When the boat grounded he gallantly helped Mildred to step ashore.

"Welcome!" he cried. "Twice, thrice or even four times welcome to Pollilop Island!"

Our friends stared (rudely, I am afraid) at the peculiar stranger, who stared back at them with equal interest. He was white from top to toe. He had on white canvas shoes, white socks, white duck trousers held up by a white leather belt, a white shirt with a white soft collar, a white necktie, and a white duck

jacket. His face was very white — his hands, too, for that matter — which seemed peculiar for a man who appeared to spend his days out in the air and sun; but, though so white, his face was in no way repulsive. Quite the contrary, it was very pleasant and kind and his light blue eyes — almost white, in fact — seemed ever ready to smile. To crown it all he had snow-white hair, though he looked young enough in spite of it, and wore a white felt hat. Suddenly Mildred realized how impolite it was to stare at any one as she was doing. Blushing, she replied to his speech of welcome.

"Thank you," she said, "Mr. — Mr. White, perhaps?"

"Exactly," replied the tall man, bowing once more, "though how you knew my name I can't imagine. How did you?"

"Why," answered Mildred, "I just thought it *might* be White. You *are* so white, you know."

"Am I?" said Mr. White. "So I am!"

"My name is Mildred," went on the little girl.

"Do you use another?" asked Mr. White.

"Another what?" inquired Mildred, puzzled.

"Another name," replied the peculiar man.

"Not often," said Mildred.

"I do," said Mr. White. "It's Gib — G-I-B"; but he pronounced it as if it were spelt "jib," just like the little sail on the Dove.

"What a funny name!" remarked Mildred with polite interest.

"Oh, it's short for General Information Bureau," said Mr. White. "You see, I'm General Information Bureau for Pollilop Island. I can tell you anything and everything about it. But my friends just call me Gibby."

"Then I shall call you Gibby," said Mildred promptly. "Gibby, this is my friend Tom and this is Mate Old William Salt of the schooner Dove."

Gibby doubled himself up in a deep bow to each.

"Are you famous?" asked Tom bluntly.

"Of course," answered Gibby. "Why?"

"Because all the generals I ever heard of were," answered Tom, "and you're General Something or Other, are n't you?"

"Of course," assented Gibby, with still another bow. "General Information Bureau for Pollilop Island, at your service."

"Then you can tell me if Belinda is here!" cried Mildred.

"Of course she is," replied Gibby. "Come on — we'll find her."

"Hurrah!" cried Mildred, clapping her hands.

Tom was secretly disappointed, for he thought their adventures would be over very soon if Belinda were found and he much preferred adventuring to staying at home and having to go to school.

For a moment Gibby assumed the posture, with extended arm, in which they had first seen him, pointing down a narrow path that led into the woods. Then he dropped his arm and started off briskly down the path, with Mildred close behind him and the others following. They had been walking only a few minutes when Mildred, who, as I have said, had the natural curiosity which is supposed to be common to little girls (and big ones too), stopped short in her tracks.

"What did you say the name of this island is?" she demanded.

"Pollilop Island," answered Gibby, also stopping.

"Lollipop Island, you mean," said Mildred.

"Of course. That's what I said — Pollilop."

"No — Lollipop!"

"Tweedledum or tweedledee," said Gibby. "Pollilop or Lollipop. Why bother? There's no difference!"

"Oh, yes, there is!" cried Mildred, though she should not have contradicted a gentleman so much older than herself. "Look at the trees, Tom."

Tom glanced up and his eyes bulged out with excitement. "Lollipops!" he shouted.

He was quite right. All about them were lollipop trees; in fact, there was no other kind of tree on the island. I suppose, my dears, you think it is the candy man who makes lollipops. Perhaps it is, where you live, but on this island they certainly grew on trees. It was just the season for them to be ripe. Every branch had dozens hanging from it, each one on its own little stick, ready to pop into your mouth. With a shout the children sprang for the nearest tree, scrambled into the lower branches — none of the trees were very tall — and in another moment each had gathered a great handful of the luscious things.

"Wait a moment," said cautious Tom as

they slid down to the ground again. "Perhaps these wild lollipops are n't good to eat."

"Of course they are," said Gibby. "That's what I live on."

Before he could finish the sentence, Mildred and Tom were busy sucking at one of the store they had gathered.

"What's yours?" asked Mildred.

"Peppermint. What's yours?"

"Mine's peppermint, too. Are they all peppermint?" she asked, with a hint of disappointment in her voice.

"Of course not," answered Gibby. "You just happened on a peppermint flavor tree. That one's lemon; that's vanilla; that's chocolate; that's raspberry —"

But before he could go farther, the children, with joyous shouts, were rushing about from tree to tree, gathering a varied crop. Their hands were so full that they kept dropping some of the lollipops on the ground, but they never stopped to pick one up.

Old Salt, though not so excited as the children, examined the trees with great interest.

"I see now," said he, "why the trees looked such a funny green when we first seen 'em. Look at the leaves!"

He plucked one and showed it to the children. What do you suppose it was made of? Paper — oiled green paper.

"All ready to wrap the lollipops up in," said Tom.

"So they won't make your fingers all sticky when you carry them," added Mildred, plucking some leaves and beginning to wrap hers up, an example Tom was not slow to follow.

"Do you like lollipops, Old Salt?" he asked, hard at work.

"Dunno," he answered. "I never ate none."

"Try one," said Mildred, offering him a beautifully wrapped specimen.

"Not till I have to, thank ye," replied the mate.

"Well, you *will* have to," said Gibby. "That's all there is to eat on this island."

Old Salt groaned. "Is that what *you* wuz brought up on?" he asked.

"Of course," answered Gibby. (Perhaps you have noticed that Gibby said "of course" much oftener than anything else.)

"And will they make us as tall and thin and white as you are?" asked Mildred.

"Of course," said Gibby again.

Old Salt groaned once more. "Well," said he, "I don't calc'late we'll stay here more'n a day or so, an' I don't believe they can act so quick as to change us much in that length of time. Still, I would n't be too greedy if I wuz you," he added, for Mildred and Tom were busy sucking away at their second one. "Come on now, Gibby. Let's find Belindy before these kiddies eat themselves sick."

"All right," assented the long man. "This way!"

He pointed in his peculiar fashion and then started off down the path again. They marched on through the lollipop forest for perhaps a quarter of an hour, seeing no one and nothing except trees, when Old Salt, observing from the position of the sun that the path appeared to be part of a big circle, became curious.

"Where's he takin' us anyway?" he demanded of Tom.

"I don't know. Ask him," said Tom.

"No — you," said Old Salt.

Mildred, who had overheard them, laughed.

"What's the matter — are you both afraid of Gibby? I'm not. Gibby, where are you taking us?"

"To Lovely Lily Lake first," answered Gibby without turning or slackening the brisk pace with which he led the way.

"What's that?" asked Tom.

"Lovely Lily Lake," answered Mildred.

"Lovely Lily Lake!" repeated Tom. "My, that's a tongue-twister. You try it, Old Salt."

"Lovely-li-li-li-li —" stammered the sailor.

"Say 'lake' quick and then you'll be through," suggested Mildred.

"Lake," Old Salt managed to gasp at last, with a sigh of relief.

"And what *is* Lovely Lily Lake?" Mildred asked.

"Oh, that's the finest summer resort on Lollipop Island. All our best families go there in summer."

"And where do the worst ones go?" Mildred demanded.

"Worst what?" inquired Gibby, at a loss.

"Families, of course."

"Oh, we don't have any on this island. They're all best families."

"How nice!" Mildred commented. "My mamma is always so worried for fear I should play with some children who were not from

the best families. Now if they were all best families at home, like here, she —"

This sort of talk did not interest Tom. He interrupted with a question.

"Where do they go in winter?"

"To Lovely Lily Lake," answered Gibby.

"But you said it was the finest *summer* resort," Tom objected.

"I did n't say it was n't the finest winter resort, too, did I?" said Gibby. "We only have one season here all the year round."

"Then they live there all the time?" Tom questioned.

"Of course. Did n't I say so?" Gibby demanded.

"No, you did n't," promptly replied Mildred and Tom together.

"Well, I did n't say they did n't. Anyway, here we are already."

As he spoke they came out of the woods and stood on the sandy shore of a little, round pool of water, very black, but clear, and perhaps two hundred feet across. Between the pool and the ocean, the shore of the island was only a narrow, sandy strip of land. On the shore of the lake opposite them there was a row of half-a-dozen little wooden huts. These huts

had no doors and the openings that served for windows had neither glass nor screens in them.

"What's this?" asked Tom.

"Lovely Lily Lake," answered Gibby.

"Lake!" exclaimed Tom. "That's no more than a duck pond."

"Lovely!" exclaimed Mildred. "This is the ugliest spot I've seen on the island." She was right, too, though even the ugliest spot was quite pretty.

"And there ain't even a single lily, so far as I can see," added Old Salt.

"Of course, of course," Gibby readily assented. "That's why they call it Lovely Lily Lake."

"Is there anything to eat in them shacks?" demanded Old Salt eagerly.

"Pollilops," answered Gibby.

"Lollipops!" corrected Mildred and Tom together.

Old Salt groaned. "Nothin' else! Then fer goodness' sake let's git on after Belindy an' quit this island as soon as we kin."

"Good!" assented Mildred quickly. "Let's look for her at once. Where is she?"

"Who?" inquired Gibby blankly.

"Why, Belinda, of course," answered Mil-

dred, thinking to herself how stupid the tall man seemed to be, though kind.

"Who's Belinda?" asked Gibby, as blankly as before.

"Who is she? My lost doll, of course. How did you dare to tell me she's here on this island, if you don't even know who she is?"

"Exactly," said Gibby. "How did I dare? How dared I did? Did dared I how? Dared did I —"

"Come, come!" said Old Salt sternly. "That's quite enough!"

"Of course it is," assented Gibby. "I thought so myself."

"But Belinda — " Mildred ventured to suggest.

"Yes, indeed — to be sure. Now that I know who she is, we must ask," said Gibby.

He stuck his fingers in his mouth and blew a shrill blast on them. In another moment our three friends fell back a step, mouths open and eyes bulging out in utter astonishment, and sat down on the ground with a simultaneous bump. No wonder! As Gibby's whistle pierced the air, there was a sudden ripple on the placid surface of Lovely Lily Lake and out of the water emerged the head of a woman,

followed at once by the top half of her, clad in a black bathing-suit.

"Good-morning, Mrs. One," said Gibby in an ordinary tone, just as if nothing unusual had happened. "Where's Belinda?"

"In the cellar," answered the woman promptly. Then she waded quickly to the shore, dashed across the sand to the nearest house, leaped onto the porch and dove head-first through the front window, just as if she were diving into water.

Gibby blew twice on his fingers. Another woman came up out of the water.

"Good-morning, Mrs. Two," said he. "Where's Belinda?"

"In the attic," answered the second mermaid, with the same promptness and assurance with which the first had indicated the cellar. Then she ran to the second house and dove into the second front window.

Gibby went on to whistle three, four, five, and six times. At each signal a new woman rose out of the water, answered his question in a new way and then disappeared into one of the houses in the same way all the others had done. As there were only six houses, each one with a great big number painted upon

the front — which made it very easy for the women to remember where they lived — our friends felt sure that the peculiar exhibition must be over when the sixth woman had dived through the sixth window, and they were right.

"You see," said Gibby, "they all know where Belinda is. Let's find her."

Our friends, however, were still too lost in astonishment to spend much thought on Belinda. The minute the sixth woman disappeared, they burst out with questions.

"Where were they?" demanded Tom, rising.

"Under the water, of course," answered Gibby.

"What were they doing there?" asked Mildred, also getting up.

"Drinking, of course," replied Gibby.

"Drinking? How? Why?" demanded the other three together.

"It's the pollilops, you see," answered Gibby.

"Lollipops," corrected Mildred.

"All right," said Gibby. "You know if you eat a lot of sweet stuff it makes you want to drink a lot of water; but if you drink too much water it makes your tummy feel bad — does n't

it?" The others nodded assent. "Living on nothing but lollipops," he went on, "of course they are thirsty all the time; but they can't drink, drink all the time in the ordinary way, so they just go under and let it soak in all over, half an hour after breakfast, half an hour after luncheon, and half an hour after dinner."

"But how do they breathe under water?" demanded Tom.

"They don't," answered Gibby. "You can hold your breath a little while — can't you? Try it."

While Gibby counted the time on his wrist watch, all three of our friends took a deep breath, holding as long as they could till their faces were red as lobsters. "Ah!" they exploded all together with a sigh of relief, gulping a fresh breath.

"Just half a minute," announced Gibby. "You could do that sixty times — could n't you?"

"I suppose so — if we had to," assented Tom.

"Well, all you have to do is to put those sixty half-minutes together and that makes half an hour. You can learn it with a little

practice. I can do it. I'm thirsty now. Goodbye for half an hour!" And without more ado the astonishing creature took a very long, very deep breath and dove kerflop into Lovely Lily Lake, clothes and all.

By this time our three adventurers were fairly well used to the extraordinary things which seemed to be the regular order on Lollipop Island, so they merely sat down to wait, Old Salt propping himself against a handy tree for a nap, while Mildred and Tom gathered still another crop of lollipops, wrapped them in the green leaves and stored them in Tom's pockets for future use. The half-hour passed rapidly. At the end of the thirtieth minute, Gibby promptly popped up out of the water, waded ashore and joined them.

"You'll catch your death of cold if you don't change your clothes," Mildred warned him.

"Oh, no," answered Gibby. "I'm dry as a bone again already. Feel of me." Strange to say it was quite true, though how it could be none of our friends could understand. (Can you? I can't.) Gibby did not offer any explanation. "I feel quite refreshed now," said he. "Come on — we'll find Belinda. All the ladies knew where she is, you noticed."

"Yes," assented Mildred, "but is she in the cellar —"

"As Mrs. One said," joined in Tom. "Or in the attic —"

"As Mrs. Two said," continued Old Salt. "Or in the dust-bin —"

"As Mrs. Three said," resumed Mildred. "Or in the oven —"

"As Mrs. Four said," Tom went on. "Or up the chimney —"

"As Mrs. Five said," added Old Salt. "Or behind the door —"

"As Mrs. Six said," finished Gibby. "How should I know?"

"Well, if *you* don't know, how should we?" Mildred demanded.

"It's very simple after all," said Gibby. "Belinda is up at my house. It's the only one on the island that has a cellar or an attic or a dust-bin or an oven or a chimney or a door —"

"So it *must* be your house!" cried Mildred.

"Exactly!" agreed Gibby. "Come on — it's on top of the hill!"

CHAPTER EIGHT

SOMETHING SOUGHT FOR AND SOMETHING LOST

He pointed for a moment in his signpost fashion and then started off along a path leading into the woods from the side of the pond opposite the homes of the six numerical women. Soon they came to a large, flat rock, square in the middle of the path. It was a funny rock, shaped exactly as if somebody had cut lengthwise through a great stone foot and laid half of it down on the ground.

"What a funny rock!" exclaimed Tom. "It looks just like a foot."

"Why should n't it?" asked Gibby. "It is a foot — the foot of the hill. Everybody stand on it and we'll be at my house in a moment."

Hardly had they done as he bid, before the whole hill began to move downward. The trees went by them on either side in orderly rows, while the path ran underneath in a straight line. Looking up they could see Gibby's house, with its flag, drawing nearer and nearer every second as the path above grew shorter.

"Well!" exclaimed Mildred. "This is the easiest way I ever knew of getting up a hill."

"Is n't it?" said Gibby. "You know what a hard job it is to climb a hill. I got very tired of it, after I'd climbed up to my house half-a-dozen times a day, year after year. So one day I thought: 'Why not let the hill climb down, instead of my climbing up?' Simple — was n't it?"

The house was very near now and the stone began to slow down.

"Look out now," Gibby warned them. "Stand as near the center of the stone as you can."

They crowded toward the center, when, lo and behold! the stone began to change its shape.

"Here we are!" cried Gibby, stepping off as the hill stopped climbing down.

"But what is the stone like now?" asked Mildred, as they stared in fascination at the new shape it had taken.

"I know!" cried Tom. "Just like my big top cut in halves!"

"Of course," said Gibby, "because it's the *top* of the hill. That's the way I know when I'm home."

"I should think you could tell by looking at your house," said Tom. Indeed, they were standing right in the doorway.

"Oh, I never bother about that," replied Gibby. "Somebody might move the house or it might blow away, and then how should I know I was home?"

This did not seem a very sensible remark to the children, but they let it go without questioning Gibby further.

"Anyway, we're here — and that's the principal thing," as Tom said.

"And now to find Belinda!" cried Mildred impatiently. "I'll take the attic."

"I'll take the cellar," said Tom.

"I'll look in the oven and up the chimney," said Old Salt.

"And I'll glance behind the door," said Gibby.

They scattered. It was a very small house. In fact, there was only one room, with one chair, one table, one stove, one bed, and one fireplace. The attic was merely a little loft, reached by a short ladder, the cellar not half big enough to swing a kitten in, not to speak of a cat. In less than two minutes the search was finished. They all met again at the front door.

"Well, *I* did n't find her," began Old Salt.

"Nor I," said Tom.

"Nor I," said Gibby.

"Nor I," said Mildred sadly. "Are you sure she's here?"

"Of course she is," answered Gibby stoutly.

"Well, have we looked everywhere the women said?" asked Mildred.

"Seems to me there was one other place," said Old Salt, scratching his head.

"I've got it!" cried Tom. "The dust-bin!"

"Of course!" exclaimed Gibby. "That's just where she is."

"Oh!" cried Mildred, shocked. "I hope she won't be too dreadfully dirty. Where is the dust-bin?"

"There is n't any!" shouted Gibby.

Our three friends stared at each other in dismay. The disappointment was too much for Mildred. Her eyes filled with tears.

This was more than Old Salt could stand. He quite forgot his manners. "You dinged idiot!" he cried, addressing Gibby. "What do ye mean by gettin' the little girl's hopes all riz like thet an' then dashin' em' all to nothin'? There ain't no dust-bin, eh? Well, we'll just make one, and you'll be the first thing in it!"

He sprang at Gibby. The long man was too quick for him and dashed off around the house, Old Salt following and the children tearing after. Round and round they went, but Gibby's long legs were too much for our friends. He gradually drew away from them and, about the sixth circuit around the house, jumped onto the flat stone in front of the door just as they swung around the corner. Old Salt made a lunge at him, but before he could grasp him the hill began to climb again, taking our friends with it. The distance increased every moment. Gibby, riding his stone, grew smaller and smaller. Soon they saw the stone change back to its foot shape. The hill, back in its proper position, stopped climbing. Gibby waved his hand to them, stepped off the stone and disappeared into the woods.

For a moment there was silence. Old Salt was the first to break it.

"Howsumdever," said he. "I s'pose there's no use cryin' over milk, spilt or not spilt. If Belindy ain't on this island, she must be on some other one an' we'll keep on lookin' till we find her. The thing to do now is to git back to the ship just as soon as we kin."

When the hill climbed down at Gibby's

command, its top was hardly higher than the rest of the island, so that they had not been able to see the harbor; but now that it was back in its right place again, they could see the ocean all ringed about. The harbor lay on the side of the island behind the house, so they started to walk around to find the shortest path leading down to it, Tom on ahead.

As they turned the corner he started and cried out: "The Dove is gone!"

"What!" shouted Old Salt.

Mildred said nothing. Words were beyond her. Yes, the ship was gone! The harbor lay quiet and empty below them. Old Salt, shading his eyes with his hand, searched the whole horizon, but there was no sign of the Dove.

"Well?" Tom inquired.

"Well," answered Old Salt, "there's nothin' to do but to make the best of it."

"And 'making the best of it' means — ?" asked Mildred.

"Stayin' right here on this island till a ship comes by an' takes us off or we find some other way of leavin'," said Old Salt.

"Do you suppose that will be long?" Tom asked. Pleasant as it was and good as the lollipops tasted, he was a little doubtful about enjoying them as a steady diet.

"I hope not," answered Old Salt with feeling, for the prospect of a lollipop diet frightened him much more than it did the children. "Anyway, the sun's pretty nigh down now, so the first thing to think of is supper an' a place to sleep. We'll have to leave plans for gettin' away until to-morrer."

They went into Gibby's house and rummaged about until they found the larder. It was well stocked with lollipops of every variety — and nothing else. Mildred and Tom each chose the kind they liked best — Mildred pineapple and Tom checkerberry — and ate half-a-dozen apiece. Old Salt, with much reluctance and only because he had had nothing to eat since breakfast, finally picked out a licorice one and managed to worry it down, taking the taste out of his mouth immediately afterward by lighting a pipe of his strongest tobacco. The lollipops made them all thirsty, especially the children, but a search showed there was not a drop of water in or near the house.

"We'll have to go down to the pool," said Old Salt.

"Oh, I'm afraid to go through the woods, it's so dark," said Mildred.

"Perhaps there's a lantern," said Tom.

They looked and soon found one, though very small it was, with only one candle. However, it was better than none, so they lit it and started off down the path in single file, Old Salt leading with the lantern. Tom, who was as timid as Mildred in these strange, black woods (Moony was behind some clouds), though he would not have admitted it for worlds, followed close in Old Salt's footsteps, hand in hand with Mildred. They passed the rock at the foot of the hill and soon reached the pond.

"Do as ye like," said Old Salt, putting the lantern down, " but I'm not a-goin' in all over, like those crazy women. The old-fashioned way of drinkin' is good enough fer me." He lay down flat and, dipping his mouth into the water, drank in great gulps, an example the children were quick to follow, though they could not drink as fast as he. When they had had enough they started back.

"Do you suppose the hill will climb down for us if we get on the rock?" asked Mildred. "I'm so tired I don't believe I could climb all the way up again to-night."

"We'll try it anyway," said Old Salt, "and

if worst comes to worst, Tom can take the lantern and I'll carry ye."

Soon they reached the rock and took their places on it — but the hill refused to budge an inch.

"Oh, dear," sighed Mildred. "It won't work and I'm too heavy for you to carry all the way up the hill."

"Oh, no, ye ain't," answered Old Salt cheerily. "I've carried many a worse load nor you."

"Perhaps it takes some magic word to start it," suggested Tom.

"I'm sure it does!" cried Mildred eagerly. "What can we say?"

"The only real one I know is what the sleight-of-hand man says when he takes the rabbits out of the hat," said Tom. "Let's see — what *is* that? I know — presto change-o!"

"Presto change-o!" they cried altogether, but the hill did not budge an inch.

"Do you know any?" asked Tom.

"Well," replied Mildred doubtfully, "there's one that Nursie says sometimes when she's being funny. I don't think it's a real one, but we'll try it anyway. It's 'lockety-splosh!'"

"Lockety-splosh! Lockety-splosh!" they shouted in unison, but the hill took no interest of any sort.

"How about you?" Tom demanded of Old Salt.

"Oh, I know a lot of 'em, but they ain't perlite enough to say before a young lady. The only one I can remember fit fer you children to say is 'Jerusalem!'"

"Humph!" said Tom. "I don't think much of that — but we can try it." So they shouted "Jerusalem! Jerusalem!" until they were hoarse. Still the obstinate hill showed not the slightest sign of moving.

"I know what's the matter," said Old Salt finally. "This hill won't start for no magic word nor nothin'. It's Gibby's hill. He trained it to climb up and down and it won't do it for no one else, like a dog."

"Then I wish he'd come and start it for us," said Mildred. "I'm sure I'd forgive him for deceiving us about Belinda. Perhaps he really thought she *was* in the house."

"Of course I did!" said the long, white man, suddenly appearing from behind the nearest tree and joining them on the rock. "Hold tight now!"

The words were hardly out of his mouth before the woods began to move down on either side of them and the path to flow beneath them. It seemed no time before the rock changed to its top shape and stopped, leaving them right in front of Gibby's house. They got off. Gibby stepped back onto the rock for a moment and, as the hill began obediently to climb back to its proper place, jumped off again and rejoined them. They saw the great ocean all around. The clouds had gone away again and it was so calm that every star was reflected in the still water. Far off in the east Moon Man was just beginning his nightly journey. Mildred waved a friendly hand toward him and it seemed to her that he made the great, round, cheesy moon nod just the tiniest bit to her in return, as if it had winked.

"We've lost our ship," Tom told Gibby.

"Why bother about a trifle like that?" returned the long man. "If it does n't come back I'll build you a new one out of my lollipop crates." Old Salt made no comment, though he thought to himself it would be something of a job to do that. "Bed's the thing just now," went on Gibby. "There's only mine, and the children must share that. You'll have to

make the floor do, Old Salt — I guess you've slept on as hard places before, eh? And I'll curl up in the fireplace."

Before you could say "Jack Robinson!" the children had lain down beside each other just as they were, with all their clothes on — and, my! how good the soft pillows felt! Just as quickly Old Salt stretched out on the floor, rolling up his coat for a pillow. But tired as they were, our friends could not go to sleep until they had had a hearty laugh at the clever way in which Gibby fitted himself into the peculiar sleeping-place he had chosen. Sitting down right in the middle of the hearthstone, he rested his feet high up against one side wall of the fireplace and leaned his head back against the other. He looked like a great, white V — and was off to sleep first of all.

CHAPTER NINE

THE NEW CAPTAIN

HAVING been the first to sleep, it was natural that Gibby should be the first to wake next morning, though it was only when a sunbeam came in through the window and fell full on his face that he did so. He crawled out of the fireplace, stood up, stretched, brushed himself off, and went out for a stroll around the house to see what new thing the world had to offer this beautiful morning. In a moment he was back in the house. Shaking Old Salt gently to wake him without disturbing the children, he signed to him to come outside and led him around behind the house.

"Look at the harbor!" said he.

Old Salt looked, rubbed his eyes, looked again, rubbed his eyes again, and then took a third look. "Well, I'll be golswizzled!" he cried. And no wonder, for there, snug in harbor, lay the Dove, anchor down and sails furled, looking just the same as when they left her yesterday.

"It's no use," said he, lost in astonishment;

"I must 'a' been dreamin'. Thar she is an' she ain't moved an inch since I brought her in yesterday mornin'."

Shaking his head in deep perplexity, he went in to rouse the children and tell them the good news. They did not stop to argue as to whether or not the Dove had been gone the evening before. It was enough for them that she was there now. There was great rejoicing and the happiest of all was Old Salt himself.

"Hooray!" he cried. "A real breakfast this mornin'! No more starvin' on them awful lollipop things! Come on!" They joined hands and raced straight down the hill through the woods to the harbor, Gibby in the lead to show them the shortest way. But when they reached the beach there was no sign of the gig in which they had come ashore.

"That gig did n't row away by itself," said Old Salt. "There's been some sort of funny business. Perhaps we was n't dreamin' after all last night. Dove ahoy!" he shouted.

They waited. There was no answer.

"Dove ahoy!" he shouted again.

Again there was no answer. They all hailed her, one at a time and then altogether. No answer nor any sign of life on the ship.

"Well, here goes!" cried Old Salt, throwing off his jacket. "Come on, Mildred!"

"But I can't swim a stroke," she protested.

"Ye don't need to," answered Old Salt. "Just take a good holt of my shoulders."

In a minute he was well on his way to the Dove, Gibby following with Tom hanging onto him. An exciting trip it was for the children, though there was no danger, for the water was as smooth as glass and Old Salt and Gibby two as strong swimmers as you would find in a day's journey. Soon they were all climbing up the starboard stern ladder together. Not a soul was to be seen on deck.

"Cap'n Bolin! Oh, Cap'n Bolin!" cried the children.

"Ben, George, Jake!" yelled Old Salt. "Where are ye, ye lazy sculpins?"

No answer. Not a sound or movement of any sort.

"No matter," said Old Salt. "Duty fust and pleasure arterwards. Git busy in the galley, Mildred."

What a breakfast they ate! Old Salt was frankly starved, having lived a whole day on nothing more than one lollipop and many pipes of tobacco. Tom and Mildred, too, were

not averse to a change from the sweet diet, and Gibby seemed perfectly satisfied to go without his accustomed food. When every last crevice in them had been filled, they began to hunt the Dove through from cellar to attic — if you may say that of a ship. Of Cap'n Bolin there was no trace nor were the men to be found either until, after all the others had given up, Old Salt located them in the darkest and furthermost corner of the forward hold, cowering behind a great pile of barrels and boxes.

"Come out of that, ye lubbers!" he cried, but either they could or would not do so. His repeated commands availing nothing, he was finally compelled to lug them on deck bodily, one at a time. Arrived there, their legs would not hold them. Their knees gave way and let them down in three pitiful heaps.

"How white they are!" said Mildred.

"They look as if they had had the scare of their lives," said Tom.

"I guess that's what *is* the matter with 'em," said Old Salt. "Hey there, Ben — where's Cap'n Bolin?"

"Ugh —" groaned Ben, shaking like a leaf.

"You, Jake," went on Old Salt. "Where's that gig we went ashore in yesterday?"

"Ugh —" groaned Jake, shaking worse than Ben.

"Now, then, George, did you an' yer rapscallion mates steal the Dove an' sail her away, or was I dreamin'?"

"Ugh —" groaned George, shaking worse than the other two put together.

"There's nothin' to be got out of 'em now, that's sure," said Old Salt, turning away in disgust. "I'd throw 'em overboard, only we need somebody to work the ship if we're goin' to look fer another island an' find Belindy. I can't sail the Dove with only Mildred an' Tom. What'll we do?"

"I know!" cried Gibby, "*I'll* get a crew!" And without another word he dove clean over the rail and struck out for the shore.

Old Salt rushed to the rail. "Will ye sure do it?" he shouted.

"Sure as sure!" Gibby shouted back, without missing a stroke.

"*Not* them crazy women!" yelled Old Salt.

"Oh, no!" shouted Gibby, almost ashore by this time, so fast did he swim.

"Then we won't need these blamed rascals

any more," said Old Salt, turning from the rail. "Come on, Tom. Help me pitch 'em overboard!"

Whether or not Old Salt really would have done it will never be known. At any rate, he never had the chance. No sooner did he and Tom start for them than the men sprang up with one accord, leaped over the rail, hit the water with great splashes, and swam away as if the Old Nick himself were after them. They reached the shore a long way from where Gibby had landed, scrambled out of the water, dashed across the beach, and disappeared into the woods without one glance behind them. And this was the last our friends ever saw of them. Perhaps the poor fellows are there to this day, living on lollipops.

Hardly had they passed out of sight before Mildred happened to glance over the stern. "Oh, look!" cried she; and indeed, there was something well worth looking at.

Gibby was already in the water, swimming back to the Dove. Behind him swam six other men, all in white like himself. Did you ever see wild geese in flight, the old gander in the lead and all his relatives spread out in a great V behind him? That is just the way

Gibby and his men were swimming, the long man ahead and three behind him on each side of the V. He soon reached the ship and came up the stern ladder, his men separating and coming on deck by the forward ladders, three on either side. They promptly formed in line and marched to the stern, where Old Salt was standing. There they drew up at attention, Gibby taking his stand before them.

"Eyes front!" he commanded. " 'Tention! Salute your new commander! Three cheers and a tiger for Cap'n Salt!"

Every right hand flew to a white cap in salute. " 'Rah, 'rah, 'rah, Cap'n Salt," they shouted in chorus. "Ti-gah — !"

Old Salt's eyes almost popped out of his head in astonishment. Then he realized the meaning of the cheers and actually blushed.

"No, no," he protested. "I ain't no cap'n; I'm only a mate."

"Then where *is* the captain?" demanded Gibby.

"Yes, yes," echoed Mildred and Tom. "Where *is* the captain?"

Old Salt scratched his head in perplexity. "Hanged if I know *where* he is," he admitted. "Well, I s'pose a ship must have a cap'n — and if you insist —"

"I insist!" cried Gibby.

"We insist!" cried Mildred and Tom together.

"So do we!" cried the six men in chorus.

"Then I accept," said Old Salt in a very modest voice, grasping the wheel. "Up anchor! Clap on all sail! We're off! Three cheers for Belindy!"

And they were given with a will.

CHAPTER TEN

BATTLE OF THE HAIRPINS

THE men sprang to obey his commands. In five minutes more they were abreast of the great rocks which marked the entrance to the harbor. Old Salt was just going to remark how glad he was to be away from the eternal lollipops when a great hullabaloo arose from behind the rock nearest them. With a chorus of shrieks the six women whom they had seen the day before soaking themselves in Lovely Lily Lake, still in their bathing-suits, climbed one after another to the top of the great rock. They held out their arms to the ship and shouted as loud as they could, a sort of wailing lament.

"What in tarnation do they want?" asked Old Salt.

"The crew!" answered Gibby, turning his back to the shore and burying his face in his hands. "Heavens! Can we not escape?"

"The crew!" exclaimed Old Salt, puzzled. "But what in the name of goodness do they want with my crew?"

"Their husbands!" explained Gibby.

"What!" cried Cap'n Salt. "Hey, you men, git — !" He was going to say "git below thar lively," but there was no need of it. Not one of the crew was to be seen. Messrs. One, Two, Three, Four, Five, and Six had disappeared as completely as if Jonah's whale had risen from the depths to swallow them!

Whatever may have been lacking in the characters of the numerical ladies, indecision was not one of their failings. When they saw neither husbands nor any evidence on the part of the Dove of an intention to stop, they dove off the rock as one man — pardon, as one woman — and struck out sturdily for the ship. The breeze was light. The Dove moved very slowly and the women swam at an angle to cut her off. It was plain that, if something did not happen quickly, they would succeed in catching her.

"Throw over the wheel!" cried Gibby.

"All right," said Old Salt, suiting the action to the word and bringing the Dove about so that the women were directly behind her. "A starn chase is a long one!"

Very true, indeed! But, though a long one, it promised to be successful. The Dove con-

tinued to move very slowly and the women, swimming strongly, gradually gained on her. Mrs. Three, a large and powerful person, drew ahead of the others. In another few minutes she would be at the stern ladder. The six men of the crew came on deck again and gathered at the bow, removing their jackets. It was evident that, rather than be caught, they would go overboard and take their chances of getting away somewhere or other by swimming, though where they expected to swim to is a mystery.

"Quick!" cried Gibby, his eyes glued to Mrs. Three's every stroke. "Quick! We must do something or we're lost!"

"Not us, but the crew — and that's worse," groaned Old Salt. "They ain't nothin' to do. The old tub won't go an inch faster in this wind."

"I've got it!" suddenly cried Mildred, who had been forgotten in the excitement. "The hairpins!"

"Saved!" yelled Old Salt. "Hustle 'em on deck as quick as scootin'! Six lives hang by a wire!"

The words were hardly out of his mouth before Mildred and Tom had sprung below

and were back on deck again with the great wooden box of ladies' delights. Gibby ripped off the cover with one thrust of a handspike. Then he and the children grabbed great handfuls of the hairpins and began to throw them over the stern.

Mrs. Three was a woman strong in character as well as in arms, legs, and wind. She paid no attention to the first three or four dozen, though they fell almost under her nose; but hairpins were few and far between on Lollipop Island and the temptation was too great to be resisted. At the fifth handful, cleverly aimed by Gibby so that the little tempters fell almost upon her, she threw up her head, gave a loud shout, grabbed as many as she could reach, thrust them into her mouth — just as you have seen mamma do when she is dressing to go out — and then dove for more. Our friends redoubled their efforts, and as Mrs. Three's sister swimmers came up with her, all five began to follow her example, looking like a flock of ducks diving for weeds in a pond. The Dove drew slowly away. Tom, as the distance grew too great for throwing, with great presence of mind pulled a sling-shot from his pocket and began to fire as fast and as far as he could,

cramming in a handful of the hairpins each time. This succeeded for a while, but the six busy women gathered them faster than Tom could shoot and it seemed as if they were going to resume the chase. The Dove was still too near them for comfort, but Old Salt had a happy inspiration.

"Quick!" he shouted. "Haul that 'ere gun astarn!"

The six anxious husbands worked with a speed to which fear lent wings. In a trice the saluting cannon was brought aft and trained over the stern, a great charge of powder rammed home and the barrel crammed with a thousand or more hairpins.

Mildred held her ears, Tom pulled the lanyard, and "Bang!" went the gun. A great cloud of hairpins flew out over the sea, landing fairly in the midst of the determined stern-chasers. This decided the action. Before the last hairpin had been garnered and stowed away safely in the last corner of the last mouth, the Dove, favored by a strengthening breeze, was safely away from danger of further pursuit. Through the glasses our friends watched the heavily laden and coolly deserted wives head about and swim back toward the

harbor entrance as fast as their metal freights would allow. The heads of Mrs. Two and Mrs. Five, frailer than the others, were dragged quite under water, but their experience in Lovely Lily Lake stood them in good stead and they seemed to have no difficulty in swimming in that peculiar position, like human submarines.

Old Salt breathed a sigh of relief, which was echoed in turn by each one of the ship's company, beginning with Mildred, Tom, and Gibby and going straight on through down to Mr. Six.

"What a hornet's nest the old Dove would 'a' been with all them lively dames aboard," said Old Salt. "Well — git the cannon forward ag'in. Mildred, I thank ye. Them hairpins of your'n certainly saved the day."

Tom spoke up handsomely, like a gentleman. "Yes," said he, "they certainly did. I'm sorry I laughed at you when you *would* bring them. They're much more use than my bows and arrows."

"Oh, that's all right," answered Mildred politely. "I'm sure they will come in handy later on."

CHAPTER ELEVEN

UNDER WAY AGAIN

"Now fer the new course and Belindy!" said Old Salt cheerfully.

"What new course?" asked Tom.

"Blamed if *I* know," frankly confessed Old Salt. "There must be another island around here som'eres. Don't you know one, Gibby?"

"Of course," replied Gibby promptly.

"Well, whar is it?"

"Dear me! That's quite another thing, now," answered the long man hesitatingly. "It might be nearly north from here and then again it might be more toward the south."

"Very loocid, very loocid," commented Old Salt sarcastically. "If ye're so sure there's an island, how is it ye don't know about whar 't is?"

"Anyway, I'm sure it is n't west."

"How comes it ye're sure of *that?*"

"Of course, it is n't west! That's the only reason."

"Well," said Old Salt moderately, "it don't seem much of a reason. But admittin' ye are

sure there's no island west an' think there may be one about north, or p'r'aps a bit south, let's split the difference an' sail east."

So they did. Life settled down into quiet routine on shipboard. Tom spelled Old Salt at the wheel; Gibby turned to and helped Mildred in the galley; and the crew went quietly about their regular work, though, as Tom learned, their sole occupation on the island had been packing lollipops into baskets. Old Salt, leaving Tom at the wheel, went on a tour of inspection of the ship and made certain that the captain's gig, in which they had all gone ashore the previous day, was actually missing. He said nothing about his discovery, but returned to the stern, got out the glasses and swept the horizon with them. Apparently he did not find what he was looking for — at least, not at first; but as the Dove sailed on he continued his vigil until he finally lowered the glasses, snapped them sharply to and called out to Tom.

"Let her off three points to starboard!"

"Aye, aye, sir!" cried Tom cheerily, as a sailor should. "What is it?"

"Small boat off the starboard bow," answered Old Salt. "I suspect it's our gig."

He was right. They soon drew near enough to recognize it. At first it appeared to be empty, but as they came alongside they saw that there was a lone man in it. He was spread out in a most extraordinary fashion on the bottom of the boat, face downward. They feared that he was dead or unconscious, but Old Salt hailed him.

"Ahoy there!"

To their great delight the man moved. At least, without changing his spread-eagle position, he turned as far as he could and looked up at them over his shoulder. Old Salt had suspected who the lone boatman might be, but the others were astonished enough to recognize Cap'n Bolin.

"Thank goodness you've come!" cried the Cap'n. He jumped up, apparently none the worse for his experience, dove overboard, swam to the Dove and was over the side in another moment.

"Never, never again will I trust any living sailor!" cried he as he stepped on deck and shook the water off himself like a dog. "To think how I trusted those rascals — fairly warmed them in my bosom, to say nothing of provisions such as no other schooner ever

shipped for her crew! And then they set me adrift!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Old Salt, breaking into uncontrollable laughter.

"My dear mate," interrupted the Cap'n indignantly, "it's no laughing matter, I assure you. When I awoke late yesterday afternoon I was lying in the bottom of the gig with my elbows bound fast. We were somewhere out of sight of land — I had no idea where. As soon as they saw I was awake, they lowered the gig from the davits, cut the painter, and set me adrift and threw the knife after me into the boat so I could free myself — if I was able to. At least I thank them for that, but the heartless wretches left nothing in the boat except the oars — not a morsel of food or a sip of water — and sailed away, kissing their hands to me. What good are a hundred oars to a lone man in a boat the size of our gig? Even if I had been able to row at any speed, I had no idea in which direction to head."

"What did you do?" demanded Tom eagerly.

"I sat down and chewed the cud of reflection," answered the precise Cap'n.

"Not very fillin', was it?" said Old Salt.

"Night came on and I sat there —"

"Still chewin'?" interposed Old Salt.

"Still chewing," assented the Cap'n gravely. "Suddenly there was a thud in the bottom of the boat as if something had fallen into it. I groped about and found a small keg of water and a tin of biscuits."

"What!" exclaimed Tom in astonishment.

"The very truth!" affirmed the Cap'n earnestly, "miraculous as it may seem! What is more, they were the very keg and the very tin that belonged in the gig and which those scoundrels had removed."

"Then how did they get here?" asked Gibby.

"That," resumed the Cap'n, "I cannot say, nor do I know as yet, though I have given considerable thought to the matter. However, my mind relieved, I ate a substantial though necessarily simple meal and sat down again to await daylight and a passing ship. But" — he repeated it for emphasis — "BUT I soon discovered that the gig was leaking. It was too dark to locate the leak, but I baled and baled with my cap. The water slowly gained, however. Dawn came soon after and I was able to find the trouble. Those devils —

excuse the word, but I can call them nothing less — had bored four holes in the bottom, filled them with putty and painted them over so I had not noticed them. The putty gradually softened and finally gave way. But the dastardly wretches had reckoned without their man! When the third and fourth holes gave way I saw baling was of no further use. What was to be done? My brain fairly surged with thought until — Eureka! — my plan was evolved. Throwing myself down into the rather undignified position in which I was obliged to appear before you, I was just able to thrust my right thumb into one hole, my left into another, one big toe into the third and the other into the fourth. Ha, ha! They had not thought of that! 'Thwarted, ye rascals!' I thought to myself. Not another drop of water came in."

"But supposing Old Salt had n't sighted you?" said Tom.

"Ah, but he did," answered the Cap'n, quite unruffled. "And now to bed!" Saying which he left them abruptly and went below.

"Supposing we had n't found him," persisted Tom.

"S'posin' a lemon was n't sour!" answered

Old Salt. "We *did* find him, so the argyment's all in his favor. But can't he sling the language!"

"And where did his provisions come from?"

"As to that I have my own suspicions, but I won't tell ye until they're justified," replied the big sailor.

Night came on soon after. Old Salt stood his trick at the wheel, while Tom lay down under the windward rail to catch a little sleep before relieving him. About nine o'clock the moon, a little past the full, began to climb the sky. Old Salt watched it with interest for a while, but as the evening drew on he began to feel very sleepy and had hard work to keep his eyes open. Seven bells struck — which is the way the ship's clock says half-past eleven — and he looked forward to midnight, when Tom's trick at the wheel began. Finally it was eight bells — midnight — and he nudged Tom with his toe to wake him.

"Why," cried the boy as he sprang up, "who is that sitting on the stern rail?"

"Nobody," answered Old Salt. "You must be dreamin' still."

"You're quite mistaken, Bill," said a quiet voice. "The boy's right."

"Hello, Moony!" cried the mate. "You certainly arrove quietly. I never heerd a sound, though I was rather expectin' ye."

"Were you, indeed?" said the little man, climbing down from his perch and coming forward into the circle of light cast by the binnacle lamp that spends the night lighting up the compass so the sailor can see which way to steer. "Hello, Tom!"

"Why, how do you do, Mr. Moon Man," answered the boy, glancing up at the moon. "How can you be here? Is the moon going to fall?"

"Oh, no," answered Moon Man quietly. "Ye don't need to worry about that. All I have to do is to carry it up till it reaches the top of the sky. After it's passed that, it falls of its own weight, just like everything else. I just point it for the right spot on the horizon and it goes all the way down by itself. Mine is a very easy job, once the moon is past the full. No eight-hour day — or night, rather — for me."

"I never thought of that," said Tom.

"Expecting me, were you?" asked Moon Man of Old Salt.

"I calc'late you're the person that saved

me a long swim after this ship to-day — ain't ye?"

"Yes, I suppose I am," assented Moon Man. "Last night, after I left the moon to itself, I thought I'd just slip down and see how things were going aboard here. I'm very much interested in the Dove, especially since Mildred and Tom sailed aboard her. I slid along in the air for a while, just keeping up with the schooner, and was quite surprised not to find any of my three friends aboard, or Cap'n Bolin either. I felt that something must be wrong, came aboard and found those three rascally sailors in charge and not another soul about. I tell you I was worried for a while. Well, to make a long story short, I frightened those three chaps within an inch of their lives. I'm quiet enough as you know me, but when I get excited I can roar like two lions and my figure does n't exactly inspire confidence in those who don't know me. I grabbed the wheel away from Big Ben and in two minutes more I had those three great boobs on their knees in a line in front of me, shaking like birch trees in the wind and with their teeth chattering till it sounded like a July hailstorm."

"They ain't stopped yet!" cried Old Salt, while he and Tom roared with laughter to think of the comical figures they must have cut.

"Well," went on Moon Man, "I made them confess all about leaving you on the island and setting the Cap'n adrift without food or water. I threatened them with the most awful tortures if they left the ship while I was away; then, with biscuits under one arm and water under the other, I sprang straight up into the air until I was high enough to spy Cap'n Bolin's gig in the distance, slid over and dropped the provisions, flew back to the ship, put her about and started off for the island where you were."

"Lollipop Island," interposed Tom.

"Is that what they call it?" asked Moon Man. "I don't care much for the name. The breeze —"

"Why did n't you rescue the Cap'n first?" Tom interrupted him.

"Ah — why did n't I?" said Moon Man. "Are you particularly fond of that oily gentleman?"

"Why, no — I don't think I am," answered Tom.

"Neither am I — *that's* why," said Moon Man, "though of course I should n't have deserted him if I had n't felt sure you would find him. I thought it would n't do him any harm to spend a day or two with only himself to exercise his limber tongue on. By the way, you found him, did n't you?"

"He's snorin' away down below," answered Old Salt.

"Then that's all right," said Moon Man. "As I was saying, I started back for the island and got there just in time. Dawn was breaking as we made the harbor. Then I disappeared, for a coal-black person like me is rather noticeable in daylight. Like the fairies, I aim to be conspicuous by my absence when the sun's above the horizon."

In a few words Old Salt informed him of all that had happened since the Dove left her anchorage in Lollipop Harbor in the morning.

"And where are you going now?" asked Moon Man.

"We hope to find another island when daylight comes," answered Tom.

"Gibby seemed to think there might be one somewhar in this direction," added Old Salt.

"You must know, Moony. Are we on the right course?"

"Not quite," answered Moon Man. "Let her go off about two points to eastward and you ought to find one; that is, if it's still there."

"If it's still there!" exclaimed Tom in astonishment. "Why should n't it be?"

"Aye, why not, indeed?" said Moon Man mysteriously.

"Is it a nice island?" asked Tom.

"Nice? — well, it's interesting, anyway," replied Moon Man.

"What do they call it?" the boy persisted.

"Wait and see," answered Moon Man.

"And is Belinda on it?" inquired a little voice from just outside the circle of light.

"Why, Mildred, where did you come from?" exclaimed Moon Man, jumping up and drawing her to him.

"From my bed — my bunk, I mean," she corrected herself. "I just woke up a moment to turn over and heard your voice, so I had to come right up to see you, though I'm very sleepy." She rubbed her eyes as she stood close beside him in kimono and slippers, from the top of which her little pink feet peeped out.

"That's a very sweet little friend," said Moon Man, giving her a friendly hug; "I thank you!"

"Are you well?" asked Mildred.

"In very fine health, I thank you," answered Moon Man.

"And is she there?"

"She?"

"Belinda — on the island?"

"I'm sorry I can't tell you that for sure," answered Moon Man. "I have n't been there for quite a while myself. Was Belinda fond of adventures?"

"Oh, yes," answered Mildred. "She was a very unusual doll and liked to do things that other dolls did n't. Why, she often went for a ride on Rover's back. Rover is my big Newfoundland dog, you know."

"How extraordinary!" exclaimed Moon Man, quite seriously.

"Is n't it?" agreed Mildred. "I'm sure very few dolls like to ride horseback — dog-back, I mean."

"You're quite right, my dear," said Moon Man, "and if she's so fond of unusual things, I should n't be surprised at all if you found her on the island you're sailing to. It's quite a

place for unusual happenings, I understand." He chuckled.

Our friends tried to learn something more from him about the island of which he spoke with such mysterious hints, but Moon Man refused to tell them a thing.

"No, no," said he. "Not a word will you get out of me. It's long past time for chicks to be asleep anyway, so I'm going."

With a parting handshake all around, he climbed up on the stern rail, crouched, jumped off with that same tremendous snap of his stout little legs, and sailed straight away for the spot on the horizon toward which the moon was descending. As soon as he was so far away he could no longer see their hands waving good-bye, even in the strong moonlight, our friends routed Gibby out, stationed him at the wheel, and went below to sleep in preparation for what, to judge by Moon Man's guarded hints, promised to be an interesting and exciting to-morrow.

CHAPTER TWELVE

ARTFUL ARTY'S A. A. A.

THE dawn came early that June night, but earlier still came a long, low, rakish craft out of the east to meet the Dove — a powerful, almost noiseless motor-boat. The lone occupant circled once around the schooner, then, satisfied that all was quiet aboard, ran up to the starboard stern ladder and made fast. As he climbed softly up, one could see that he was very small — hardly more than four feet tall — but what he lacked in stature, he made up in ferocity of appearance. Swarthy black hair under a big felt hat, an enormous mustache with drooping ends, a red handkerchief about the neck, two pistols thrust into a thick leather belt, two more sticking out of the top of high boots, a cutlass at his side, and a fierce scowl which seemed to stretch from his bushy black eyebrows down the whole front of him to his very boot toes — these were the striking features of the little man. He was a pirate! One glance was enough to convince any one it was utterly impossible he could be anything else!

"Bang!"

As he gained the deck, the pirate pulled a pistol from his belt and fired into the air. It must be admitted that Gibby, lulled by the balmy night and the gentle motion, had gone fast asleep on his feet at the wheel. He woke with a start.

"Surrender!" cried the pirate.

"I have already," was Gibby's prompt reply.

"Where is your treasure chest?"

"My, I wish I had one! We'd share it."

"Don't trifle with me!" cried the pirate, with an even fiercer scowl than his usual one. "Where is it?"

"I'm not trifling," replied Gibby, as he spied Old Salt's head emerging from the forward companionway. "I have n't any. This is a fishing schooner."

"Oh, no," said the pirate, sniffing the air. "You can't fool me. There ain't no such thing as a smell-less fishing schooner."

Old Salt removed his shoes and began to steal noiselessly toward them. The pirate, facing Gibby at the wheel, stood with his back to Old Salt. Gibby watched the mate with a beating heart, but managed to hold his voice

to an ordinary conversational tone — that is, a tone as ordinary as it is possible to use in talking with an evil-looking pirate of swarthy mien and hair triggers.

"Of course you don't smell any fish," said he. "We have n't shipped any yet — and they don't smell anyway."

"Shipped any!" sneered the pirate. "Caught any, you mean. How do you get your fish — in cans?"

"No," answered Gibby. "In jars."

"Jars!" cried the pirate, really astonished this time. "What kind of fish are they?"

"Goldfish," replied Gibby. "We're on the way to Japan for a cargo."

"Ha, ha!" cried the pirate. "Lying again! This is a fine course to lay for Japan. You ought to be sailing backward. Don't you know that Japan —"

This he said and nothing more. The huge bulk of Old Salt landed with one tremendous spring in the middle of his sentence — and on his back and shoulders. He was borne to the deck with the usual dull thud. His hat fell off and with it his jet black hair. Gibby, too, was on him with a single bound. Rip! — off came the mustache! Rap! — out came the pistols,

all four! Old Salt snatched the cutlass and the right boot, Gibby the left. They sprang up, freeing the pirate, and before them stood one of the smallest, scrawniest little persons imaginable, with a puckered, wizened face and a head literally as bald as a billiard ball. Old Salt and Gibby fell into a great burst of laughter at the measly little stranger, who stood blinking at them like an owl.

"So, Artful Arty!" cried Gibby. "You thought I did n't recognize you!"

"Hello, Gibby," said the little man mournfully.

"Friend o' yourn?" demanded Old Salt of Gibby, between peals of laughter.

"Not exactly," said Gibby. "An old acquaintance, though."

"Well, shall we shoot him with his own pistols or hang him from the yardarm?" asked Old Salt. "He's a pirate, accordin' to his behavior and fittin's, so we got to do one or the other. That's law!"

Gibby laughed. "Anyway, let's not do it before the others are up. I'm sure they'd hate to miss the fun — eh, Arty?"

Arty's melancholy voice belied the optimism of his words. "I've got through life pretty

well so far," said he. "Been in and out of a good many things and had some tight squeezes — and I don't believe I was born to be either shot or hung!"

"Ho, ho, Arty, me lad!" laughed Gibby. "You don't know who's on this ship. Just wait and see!"

"Huh!" grunted Arty. "I guess there ain't no one worse than you two fellers. I ain't afraid!"

He spoke too soon. Scarcely were the words out of his mouth, when there came a terrible yell from the forward part of the ship. Dawn was breaking and Mr. One had just come on deck, followed by Messrs. Two, Three, Four, Five, and Six. No sooner did they catch sight of Arty than, as one man, they emitted the blood-curdling yell just referred to and dashed headlong astern, also as one man. Arty evidently recognized them and realized he was the object of their attack. No avenue of escape was open except to jump overboard and he was too much of a coward for that. So he dodged behind the wheel and crouched there, pale and trembling. Old Salt and Gibby threw themselves in the path of the men and Old Salt roared out a command.

"Halt!" he cried. "What d'ye mean? Have ye gone crazy?"

The six men all began to talk at once. Each one tried to outdo all the others in loudness of voice, and Old Salt could make neither head nor tail of what they were saying, though evidently they were accusing Arty of something. He glanced hopelessly at Gibby.

"What did I tell you, Arty?" laughed the tall man. "Your friends have n't forgotten you."

Arty groaned. "Take 'em away!" he begged.

"Git back forward!" ordered Old Salt. "Now, then, what's all this about?" he demanded of Arty, as the men, slowly and with many mutterings, obeyed his command.

"I'm afraid Arty's too modest to tell you," said Gibby.

"No, I ain't," said Arty, his confidence returning now that he saw he was safe. "It's women."

"The submarine ladies of Pollilop Island," explained Gibby. "In other words, the wives of our efficient crew."

"Oh!" said Old Salt, though he was still quite in the dark.

"Yes, them," said the would-be pirate.

"Artful Arty's Agile Aquatic Aggregation!" (Perhaps, my dears, you'll have to get somebody to explain those last two words to you.) "Some swimmers, them girls! Ain't they?"

"You're right!" agreed Old Salt, thinking of the chase they had given the Dove.

"They was headliners, I tell you!" went on Arty. "Swimmin' of all kinds and plain and fancy divin'. I played 'em in the pools of all the amusement parks in the islands to the south of here and made big money. Then on the way back home I thought we'd stop off at Lollipop Island. I did n't know much about it, but I'd heard there was a pond there and some men, and that generally meant good money for the five A's."

"What's them?" demanded Old Salt.

"Artful Arty's Agile Aquatic Aggregation."

"Don't say all that ag'in," broke in Gibby. "Make it short. I'll finish. Arty was right. There *were* men on the island — my six packers, as you know. It was all over as soon as those six girls caught sight of them. Eating lollipops looked a lot easier to them than working for Arty. My men had no chance. You saw what a determined old party Mrs.

Three was. Well, she fixed her affections on Three — because he was the smallest and she the largest, I suppose; it generally goes that way — and each of the others picked a favorite, after a little quarreling over them. In two weeks it was all over. I had to be minister, best men, and bridesmaids at six weddings all on one day. Arty, knowing his birds, got away on a passing ship before the fatal moment."

"Yes," said Arty. "I kind of reckoned they was n't goin' to make what you might call ideal couples, and I knew I'd get the blame for bringin' the blushin' brides to the island, though goodness knows I did n't want 'em to marry and quit me. It cost me a lot of money. Anyhow, I managed to keep away from the lovin' husbands until this mornin'. You saw how fond they are of me, though goodness knows I ain't to blame for their troubles."

"If we had n't been round it would have gone hard with you, that's sure," said Old Salt. "And now we've done you a good turn, p'r'aps you can help us. I'll tell you what we're lookin' fer —"

"I say, Arty," Gibby interrupted, with a wink at Old Salt, "what are you doing for a

living now that you've lost the five A's? You must have struck something rich if that fine-running motor-boat that you tried to scuttle us with belongs to you."

"It does," said Arty.

"Well —"

"I ain't obliged to tell you, am I?"

"I don't know how I can make you," assented Gibby.

"Then I guess I won't — not now, at any rate."

"Oh, very well," said Gibby, with another wink at Old Salt.

"I tell you what I *will* do," said Arty. "I won't tell you about it, but you come along with me and perhaps you'll find out what it is — or perhaps not. You're not goin' anywhere in particular, are you?"

"Why," said Old Salt. "We was calc'latin' to find —"

"No, we're just out for a cruise," Gibby interrupted again, with still another wink. "It makes no difference to us where we go."

"Then keep right ahead on this course," said Arty, "and we'll pick up my place by noon. What about some breakfast? I sure am hungry."

As he spoke Tom came on deck to announce that breakfast was ready and the young quartermaster was duly introduced to the ex-pirate.

"Go down in the galley with Tom," said Old Salt to Arty, "and he'll give ye somethin' to help that empty feelin'."

"Not much I don't go below; not with them six lunatics aboard thirstin' fer my blood," protested Arty.

"That's all right," said Old Salt. "I'll look out for *them*."

"But —" Arty protested.

"Go ahead, Arty," urged Gibby. "You can depend on Old Salt keeping his word — which is more than I can say for some people," he added meaningly.

As they disappeared below Old Salt turned to Gibby.

"What's the matter with you?" he demanded. "All them winks an' breakin' in on me when I was tryin' to git some information out of Arty!"

"You don't know him as well as I do," laughed Gibby. "He did n't get the artful part of his name for nothing. You think everybody else is as honest as you are. If you

had told him we were hunting for — what *is* her name?"

"Belindy," said Old Salt.

"Belinda," went on Gibby, "even supposing he knew anything about her, he certainly would n't help us unless he could arrange some way of making something for himself out of it."

"Oh, he's *that* kind, is he?" said Old Salt. "Humph! I don't think much of *them!*"

"Nor I," agreed Gibby, "but that's his kind. Why, the very day he left the island, before those girls of his got married to my packers, he wheedled every one of the men into paying him something — indemnity, he called it; actually convinced them that they owed him money for marrying the girls!"

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

"LAND HO!" AGAIN

TWELVE o'clock came, but with it no sign of land. Old Salt held on the course for another hour, and then, as there still was nothing but large sections of ocean to be seen, sent for Arty.

"I thought we was to pick up your island at noon on this course," said he.

"I suppose they must have moved the blamed thing again," said Arty. "They're always doing it."

"Move an island!" exclaimed Tom.

"You remember Moony said it was a funny kind of an island," Mildred, who was standing quietly by, reminded them.

"Well, it don't go very fast," said Arty. "It's too heavy. It was dead ahead of us on this course when I left this morning. We ought to be able to sight it from the masthead."

"S'posin' you take a look," said Old Salt.

Arty went forward and started up the foremast shrouds, climbing with the nimbleness of a monkey, which, indeed, he resembled,

with his long arms all out of proportion to his thick, squat body. Gaining the cross-trees, he swept the horizon with a glance.

"There she is," he called, pointing, "about two points off the starboard bow."

"Two points it is," said Old Salt, putting the helm over.

"She's still movin'," called Arty again. "You'd better let her off a point more, Old Salt, so as to head her off."

Everything was "she" or "her" to Arty, but our friends understood what he meant.

"Right-o!" cried Old Salt, suiting the action to the word.

Arty regained the deck. "It'll take three or four hours to catch up with her," said he, "so I'll turn in for a little nap if no one ain't got no objections" — and he dove below.

Soon they could see the island from the deck. At the end of three hours, as Arty had predicted, they were pretty well inshore. Old Salt searched the shore with his glasses, but there was no sign of a harbor or any sheltered anchorage. He sent for Arty again and explained the situation to him.

"Gimme the glasses," said he. "Yes — I thought so. They've sighted us and they're

beginning to turn her. The harbor will be along in a little while. There's one of the lighthouses at the entrance now," he added, pointing off to the north.

Astonished as our friends were at the idea of an island being turned around so that the mouth of the harbor should come opposite the ship, they had to admit Arty was telling the truth. As they looked, the shore line, instead of appearing to be moving backward as the Dove sailed forward, as it usually does, was, on the contrary, catching up with the ship and passing it. Though Old Salt had had many adventures in the course of his long seafaring life, this was something entirely novel even for him. His eyes stood out of his head like great marbles.

"How in tarnation are ye goin' to lay a course for a harbor mouth that don't stay still?" he demanded.

"Oh, they'll stop her in a minute," said Arty.

Right again. Very soon the two lighthouses guarding the entrance to the harbor, one on each side, that had passed them a few minutes before, seemed to stand still and then to start back toward them.

"They're running it backward now!" exclaimed Tom.

"It only *looks* so," Arty explained. "They've stopped her and we're drawing nearer — that's all."

Once more he was right, as the others could see when they had had time to adjust their eyes and ideas to the new conditions.

"Well!" exclaimed Gibby, "I'll admit Moony was drawing it mild when he said this was an unusual island. Unusual is no word for it!"

"Head her anywhere between the lights, Old Salt," said Arty. "It's all deep water."

In twenty minutes more they came up with the lighthouse at the northerly entrance of the harbor and could see inside. Evidently there was not much traffic at this port. Not a single vessel was at anchor. The only craft visible were a few small ones — rowboats, sailing skiffs, and a motor-boat or two — moored alongside the quay.

"Well, I'll be gum-swizzled!" exclaimed Old Salt. "Never did I see a harbor like this. Not a single vessel worth more than fifty cents in it — and look at the shape!"

No wonder he was astonished. The harbor

was exactly like a great V, with the lighthouses at the outer points of the two arms. Each of these arms was simply one long concrete quay and at the point where they met there was a round iron pillar, not high but very thick.

"There's somethin' very suspicious about all this," insisted Old Salt as they stood into the harbor. "What's this place called, Arty?"

"Scissors Harbor," he answered. "It's the only one on the island."

"One of 'em's quite enough," commented the sailor dryly, ordering the anchor dropped as they drew opposite the landing-place.

"Have you noticed there's not a soul to be seen ashore?" asked Mildred.

"Nothing could surprise me now," said Gibby, and the others all chorused assent.

"Oh," said Arty, "they're all home to supper now, except possibly the harbor-master. He may be round. They have some very fixed ideas on this island and one of 'em is a set time for meals, no matter what happens. If the King of England himself come to this island, he would n't find a soul to welcome him if he got here at meal-time — seven to eight in the morning, twelve to one at noon, and six to seven at night."

"Say!" exclaimed Old Salt, "that's not such a bad idea. I think I'll like these fellers after all. They must be all-fired clever to arrange things like that. Should n't wonder if I'd move here. Three square meals a day right on the tick is one or two more than I've generally been able to collect. Yes, sir — they certainly are clever!"

"Clever!" cried Arty. "Why, brains is their middle name. Come on ashore."

So they all piled into Arty's motor-boat and were at the landing-stage in two minutes. Old Salt, however, had the foresight to tow the Dove's gig behind, not knowing if Arty might be as ready to take them aboard again as he had been to bring them ashore.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

SOME SURPRISING THINGS

Tom jumped out first and gallantly helped Mildred. She ran across the float and dashed up the stairs to the quay, but at the top she stopped short, uttered a piercing shriek, recoiled, and would have fallen back down the steps had Tom not been close behind to catch her; and no wonder, for something most extraordinary had emerged from the door of the building on the quay! All our friends remained rooted where they stood, eyes bulging and mouths wide open. Arty alone retained his composure — not surprising, when we recall that he had lived on the island for some time and was used to the sight which so astounded and frightened the others.

"Hello, Dick," said he. "I've brought some visitors to Oracle Island."

"They're very welcome, I'm sure," said the thing in a clear, soft, agreeable voice and with clean-cut speech.

Then it bowed its head deeply, for it had a head, just like yours and mine. There were a

pair of hands, too, that evidently belonged to it and two feet, which moved about directly under the head at about the same distance from it as the feet of a man of medium size would be from his head. A moment's observation of the peculiar object assured our friends that the head, hands, and feet must belong to the same person, if person it could be called; but there was absolutely no sign of a body or of the legs and arms which properly belonged with the parts they could see.

Gibby was the first to recover his speech. "In the name of heaven, Arty," said he, "what is it?"

"*Who* is it, you mean," answered Arty. "That's only Dick, the harbor-master."

"Does he have any other name, or is Dick all?" asked Gibby.

"His whole name is Dick Dickson," answered Arty.

"Oh," said Gibby, "there's so little of him I thought perhaps one name was enough."

"Are they all named that way?" Mildred queried. "Dick Dickson and Jack Jackson and George Georgeson and so on?"

"Yes," answered Arty. "It's a fine idea and saves lots of trouble. You see if you know

a fellow's first name you can't make any mistake about his last one — and the other way round, too. They call me Arty Artson here on the island."

"But what's the matter with friend Dick?" inquired Gibby. "Do you suppose he was late for work this morning and hurried away from the house so quickly that he forgot and left part of himself at home?"

"Oh, no," answered Arty, in entire seriousness. "All the natives are like that."

"All of them!" exclaimed Old Salt, finally finding his tongue.

Used though he was to strange adventures in odd corners of the world, the peculiarities of Dick Dickson had affected him even more than the others.

"Yes, all of us, if I may be permitted to join the conversation," said Dick Dickson, who had stood by listening quietly to the remarks of our friends, which, it must be admitted, had been more frank than polite. "The inhabitants of Oracle Island were not always as you see me to-day," he continued. "Centuries ago we were burdened with all the unnecessary body and limbs you still have, until in the course of his meditations, it occurred to

the mind of our great philosopher, Mart Martson, that man might still continue to perform all his work in the world and at the same time be freed from practically all his ills, were he reduced to the simple proportions which you see in me."

"But you can still have a headache," interrupted Mildred, who remembered some of her own.

"Yes," admitted Dick Dickson, "but we very seldom do. Headaches, young lady, are very apt to come from too much rich food in little stomachs — as perhaps you know; and as we have no stomachs, we have no headaches."

"How did you get rid of the other parts of you?" asked Tom.

"Through thought, my lad," replied Dick Dickson placidly, "— concentrated centuries of thought. Through thinking we could do without them, the unnecessary parts were gradually thought away, one by one. We have only come to our present perfect state in recent times. Why, I remember my grandfather told me that his grandfather still had a bit of left shoulder-blade he had not been able to think off. It was always getting in his way — when

he went through a door, for instance. You see," he continued, pointing to the house out of which he had come, "even the young people of your party would not be able to go through one of our doors except by walking sideways" — which was quite true, for the door was very narrow, though plenty wide enough for all there was of Dick.

"And how did you stop when there were only your present details left?" Gibby inquired.

"Oh, we gave up thinking about it and that stopped everything exactly where it was. Unfortunately a few of the weaker brethren held on a bit too long. The tongue turned out to be the next thing to go and the poor creatures are quite dumb!"

I must admit that Dick Dickson's lecture was taking our friends into quite deep water. In other words, they did n't understand what he was talking about. Perhaps you don't either — indeed, I'm not sure whether or not I do myself. Mildred, in fact, had become quite impatient. She had come to this island to find Belinda, not to spend valuable time listening to learned lectures by a rather tiresome gentleman of decidedly limited build.

She was looking for action, not words. Without warning she suddenly stuck out her finger and prodded Dick Dickson in what would have been the pit of his stomach, had that part of him been present. No — there was nothing there. Her arm, extended to its full length, stuck out beyond what would have been the center of his spine — had he boasted such an article. She swung it around in a wide circle between his head and his heels. Nothing stopped it! Our other friends, who had been as skeptical as Mildred, though less bold, heaved a sigh of relief all together. So it was true!

"Well," said Mildred, "now that that's settled, let's be going on."

"But where?" asked Tom.

"To look for Belinda, of course. Is n't that what we came for?" replied Mildred as they moved away, Dick Dickson leading.

"Who's Belinda?" asked Arty.

"My doll," answered Mildred. "She fell overboard one day when we were out rowing and Old Salt said she might have swum to one of the islands."

Only Gibby happened to be watching Arty at the moment. He was surprised to see the

little man start and turn white. "Very suspicious!" thought Gibby to himself, but he said nothing.

It was evident that the few houses strung along the quay had to do only with the harbor and its commerce — if there was any. They seemed quite deserted. With Dick and Arty leading, the party struck off along a road that led up the hill. In a few minutes they came to the crest and there lay a town before them. First of all they noticed it had a solid masonry wall all around, higher than a man's head.

"What!" exclaimed Gibby, as they stopped to take in the view. "A walled town! I thought none of those had been built since many hundred years ago."

"The wall has only been built about fifty years," said Dick, "since we became reduced to our present proportions. It's a very handy thing at night to keep anybody from accidentally wandering out of town in the dark. You see we're apt to drift right through an ordinary fence with spaces in it without ever knowing it."

The road led on directly to the town gate. It was in the shape of an archway. In the center there was a strong wooden door and on

either side of it a narrow slit not more than a foot and a half wide.

Dick Dickson looked doubtfully at Old Salt. "It will be no use knocking at the door now," said he. "It's half-past six. Every one is home for supper and nobody goes out afterward. I'm afraid you won't be able to squeeze through the openings we use."

"Don't worry about me," replied Old Salt, whose ears had pricked up at the mention of supper. "I'll manage to get in!"

And without another word he sprang at the wall, grasped the top, and swung himself over with a celerity remarkable in a stout man of his age. Dick Dickson, of course, passed in without trouble, while Mildred, Tom, and even Gibby managed readily by going in sideways. Arty certainly looked rather thick to get through the openings, and altogether too short to follow Old Salt's example. However, as our friends reflected, he must have passed through many times before. True, indeed! He never hesitated. Pulling a piece of soap out of his pocket, he rubbed it briskly, first on one side of the opening and then on the other, until he had them both well greased. Then he stepped back a little way, dashed at the open-

ing as fast as his little legs would carry him, and launched himself in a headlong dive, turning sideways as he did so. For a moment he threatened to stick — but, no! His momentum prevailed, with the assistance of the soap. He fell through inside the wall, picking himself up and dusting off his clothes in a matter-of-fact way that showed he was entirely used to this peculiar way of arriving home.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

STRANGE FOLKS AND HOMES

"Well, where do we eat?" demanded Old Salt.

"I shall take you to my house," replied Dick Dickson, starting off up a street.

The houses, our friends noticed, were not so very different from the kind they were used to, except that they were decidedly small and had the peculiar narrow doorways, though the windows, provided with shutters but no glass, were good-sized. In a few minutes Dick paused before one of them and slid in through the doorway, inviting the others to follow Mildred. Tom and Gibby did so, but Old Salt and Arty had to climb in through a window, luckily not too high up, Old Salt giving the little man a boost. Once inside they found themselves in a plain room of moderate size. Dick presented them to three creatures like himself, who — as I might say — were floating about in the room. They were his wife, his mother, and his father. All three made deep bows as he introduced them. (Can you imagine a head making a deep bow without

any body attached to it? It is a comical sight, I assure you.)

Dick did not invite them to sit down, for there was not a stick of furniture in the room except one plain table. What would be the use of chairs for people built like the inhabitants of Oracle Island? Mildred, inquisitive as ever and with a woman's instinct, began to prowl about the house. Leading out of the room they were in — the living-room, we should call it — were two very small rooms, entered by the same narrow doorways. In one of them were a lot of shelves. Packages and a large number of bowls and glasses stood on these. "The pantry," thought Mildred. In the other stood a washbowl and a foot-tub — nothing else except soap and towels.

Mrs. Dickson noticed how curious Mildred was.

"I suppose it does interest you," said she, "if you've never been in a house like ours before. Would n't you like to see the bedrooms?"

Of course Mildred would, so Mrs. Dickson led the way up the narrow stairs at one side of the living-room, with an opening at the top leading to the upper story, so small that even Mildred could hardly squeeze through it.

"Not much, you see," said Mrs. Dickson, when they stood in one of the bedrooms, of which there were two, each about half as large as the living-room. "It's very economical, being able to do without a lot of furniture."

Indeed, there was very little furniture. In each room the most prominent object was a dressing-table, quite without drawers, and there were two little cots, about three feet long. After thinking a moment Mildred realized that, while a head required a pillow as large as any of us use, there was quite space enough on the rest of the cot to supply the little room called for by one pair each of hands and feet. The Oracle Island houses would not have made a hit, however, with your mother or mine. There was not a closet in them — think of that!

It took but a minute to inspect the bedrooms — there was so little to inspect — and when they went downstairs again, they found Gibby trying to conduct a polite conversation with Dick and his father, while Tom, Arty, and Old Salt were talking earnestly together in a corner of the room.

"My dear," said Dick to his wife, "our visitors must be hungry."

"Oh!" cried Mrs. Dickson, "I'm so sorry I did n't think of it. They shall have something at once —" and she went into the pantry.

At the mention of food, Old Salt and Tom heaved audible sighs of relief, while Arty at once started to clamber out the window.

Old Salt regarded him with astonishment.

"Hey, none of that!" he cried, catching him by the slack of his trousers and hauling him in again. "What's the matter?"

"I really must be going," answered Arty, starting to climb out again. "I have an appointment at seven o'clock. I'll see you later."

"Not much you won't!" exclaimed Old Salt, pulling him back once more. "I don't trust you, my boy. It ain't for nothin' they call you Artful Arty. You're our only link between the peculiar folks here — savin' their presence — and the rest of the world; and ye'll stay right here till I git ready to go with ye!"

By this time Mrs. Dickson had brought in several of the bowls Mildred had seen in the pantry and placed them upon the table. Each one was filled with some little hard, round balls, about the size of an all-day-sucker, a different color in each bowl.

"Help yourself," said Mrs. Dickson hospitably.

Mildred examined the little balls. They looked like candy and, to tell the truth, even she had had enough of candy on Lollipop Island to last her for some time.

"Do you *eat* these?" she asked.

"I'm afraid you'd find them rather hard to chew," answered Mrs. Dickson. Mildred picked one up and found it was indeed like a pebble. "You see," her hostess went on, "we don't need any regular food. What would we do with it? There's no place for it to go after we swallow it. Each one of these little balls is highly flavored with some pleasant taste, so we just put them in our mouths, one after another, according to which flavor we like best, suck them for a while, and then throw them away. That's a meal."

Old Salt could not keep back a groan, but Mildred, trying to appear polite, merely said, "Oh!" There could n't be anything very satisfying for a hungry little girl in a meal like that, thought she to herself. Old Salt could hardly keep back another groan when he thought of it a second time; he made up his mind promptly.

"Well," said he, "it's beginnin' to get dusk outside, and as we don't know the road back to the ship very well, we'd better be goin'."

"Oh, don't hurry!" exclaimed the entire Dickson family, who were very polite; and Mrs. Dickson added: "We'd be glad to have you stay the night. Of course we have n't room for all in our house, but Mildred and Tom could stay here, Captain Salt could go with Arty, and we'd find a place for Mr. Gibby in some friend's house."

"You're very kind, I'm sure," said Mildred quickly, remembering the tiny cots she had seen, "but we really must get back to the Dove. Er" — she hesitated, trying to think of an excuse — "why, Cap'n Bolin will be expecting us."

"We forgot all about Cap'n Bolin!" exclaimed Tom.

"So we did!" cried Gibby and Old Salt together.

"Do you suppose he's still asleep?" Tom asked.

"At any rate, it's our duty to find out," insisted Old Salt. "He'll think we've run off and left him."

"Well, if you *must* go," said Dick Dickson regretfully. "You'll be here to-morrow?"

"Sartain, sartain," answered Old Salt promptly. "I calc'late to look round your island a bit."

"You must n't fail to be here for the temple service at four o'clock in the afternoon," said old Mr. Dickson. "You'll find it very interesting!"

"Of course, of course," assented Old Salt, who was n't much of a hand at visiting temples or any other kind of churches, but whose appetite for supper made him so anxious to get away that he would have agreed to anything.

Dick offered to accompany them to the harbor, but Gibby begged him not to trouble, saying he knew it was not the habit of Oracle Islanders to go out after supper, very early to bed and not any too early to rise being their version of our familiar saying. (Not a bad one, is it?) So after good-byes and renewed promises to return to-morrow, our friends left. They had hardly issued from the doors and windows before Arty, without a word, darted off as fast as his little legs could carry him.

"Quick — grab him!" yelled Old Salt, starting in pursuit, with Tom and Gibby at his heels.

Gibby's long legs outran them all and he caught Arty before the little man had got a hundred yards down the street.

"What's the matter?" demanded Arty, as Tom and Old Salt came up.

"Tryin' to sneak, was ye?" Old Salt really seemed quite angry. "You come along with us. I ain't goin' to let anybody as slippery as you out of my sight till we're ten miles off-shore on the way home."

"Aw, what's the matter?" Arty protested. "I got a date to play cards this evenin' with some friends of mine up the street."

Old Salt, without another word, tucked the little man under one arm, like a sack of grain, and started back toward the city gate. After they had gone some distance, however, he made one remark. "All card-playin' what's done this evenin' will be aboard the Dove," said he.

When they came to the city gate, Gibby went outside first and Old Salt tossed Arty over the wall to him just as easily as he had thrown little Jim into the water from the wharf. They soon reached the crest of the hill and were glad to see that this time the Dove had not stolen away during their ab-

sence. As soon as they reached the quay, Old Salt hailed the schooner and, when one of the crew answered, made it plain that, if supper were not prepared in two shakes of a lamb's tail, there would be trouble when he got aboard. They made Arty take them off in his motor-boat. By the time he got the engine started, smoke was pouring from the galley chimney on the Dove, so they all felt decidedly better.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

ON THE WAY TO THE TEMPLE

THE next day, mindful of the singular taste in food of the Oracle Islanders, our friends decided not to go ashore for the temple ceremony until after lunch. Old Salt, recalling Artful Arty's attempts to sneak away from them the previous day, was uneasy in his mind. He was in favor of hauling up the anchor and sailing away to still another island, saying he had had quite enough of islands where there was nothing fit to eat, but all the others wished to keep their promise to visit the temple, insisting that it would be impolite to the Dicksons, who had been so kind to them, not to do so. Mildred pointed out, too, that they had had no time the day before to make even the slightest search for Belinda, the one purpose for which they had come to Oracle Island. So Old Salt gave in. However he took Cap'n Bolin aside and told him he must remain aboard with the crew to be ready for any emergency, with the capstan bars all in place to swing up the anchor at a moment's notice.

(The capstan, my dears, is the thing with which the anchor is hauled up. It looks like a turnstile and goes round and round, winding in the anchor chain. On a ship like the Dove, where there is no steam, it is worked by long bars set into the round head of the capstan, like the spokes of a wheel. The sailors push against these bars.)

When, about two o'clock, they all went over the side to go ashore in Arty's motor-boat and found that Cap'n Bolin was not coming, they called to him to join them; but he excused himself, saying that he had not made up for his lost sleep even yet and preferred to spend the afternoon in his bunk. It was just as quiet on the quay as it had been the day before. Only Dick was there waiting for them and they started off together at once for the city. They passed inside as they had the previous day, the thin ones through the thin gateway, Old Salt over the wall, and Arty with the aid of his soaped doorposts. Dick again led them to his home, explaining that he had promised to call for his family. They had not been walking more than two or three minutes after entering the city before they realized that Gibby was no longer with them.

Old Salt was quite disturbed about it. He did not distrust Gibby, of whom he had grown very fond, but feared that something had happened to him. They all stopped and Old Salt started to walk back, for a moment forgetting Arty in his anxiety about Gibby. No sooner was his eye off the little fellow than the latter bolted off at a great pace down the narrow alley that was close at hand. The others were busy watching Old Salt. By the time they realized Arty was fleeing from them, he had made good his escape in the maze of narrow streets, as Gibby's long legs were not at hand to outrun him. Old Salt was too far away to try to follow him and Mildred clung to Tom's arm, afraid he might get lost and come to some harm in the strange city if he attempted to chase Arty.

Old Salt was really distressed now; but Dick reassured him, saying that no crime of any sort had been known in the city since the inhabitants had attained their present advanced form; and as Gibby came in sight while he was speaking, running to rejoin them, it was agreed to go on, although Old Salt did so with many doubtful shakes of the head and much muttering to himself.

They reached Dick Dickson's house without further adventure of any sort and, Mrs. Dickson and the elder Dicksons joining them, set off for the temple, which was well down in the center of the city. Soon they came out of a side street onto a great, long, wide avenue, evidently the main thoroughfare of the city. At the end of it they could see a huge building crowned with one of those peculiar Byzantine towers which look like a mammoth onion. (Have you ever seen one? Perhaps only in pictures, for there are very few of them in our country.) It was not necessary for Dick to explain to them that that was the temple for which they were bound. They guessed it at once. It seemed, too, as if every one else in the city was headed the same way. Before, beside, and behind them the street was thronged — if I may use that expression for such peculiar beings as the Oracle Islanders — with heads, all hurrying toward the temple, and the hands and feet that belonged with them. Our friends noticed that many of the shopkeepers were closing their shops, evidently going to the temple themselves. At that there were not many shops and most of them seemed to be devoted to the sale of the

candy-like food of the islanders. Gibby remarked upon this fact.

"Well," said Dick, "we don't buy much of anything else. You have seen how little furniture we need; there is no fuel, for we do not cook nor do we require fires to keep us warm in this climate: and as for clothing, all we want is the ruffle which, as you see, every one wears about his neck to conceal the place where it ends. Some very old people still wear wooden shoes, but nearly all of us go barefoot. So what would the shops sell?"

It was true, when our friends stopped to think of it. Moving forward at a good pace, they passed an old couple with wooden shoes, the clack-clack of the soles sounding strangely loud amid the shuffling of hundreds of unshod feet.

"Does this ceremony take place every day?" asked Tom.

"Yes," replied Dick Dickson. "It is very important for us all. Every public question that comes up is referred to the oracle in the temple and settled according to her answer."

Ever since Tom had been on the island he had wondered what the name "Oracle" meant, but had been too proud to ask. From

Dick's reply he reasoned that it must be some sort of a woman who answered questions and he began to lose interest at once. He hoped the ceremony, whatever it might turn out to be, would not last very long.

In a few minutes more they came into the big square on the farther side of which the temple stood. It was a large but very plain building, covered with stucco that was dazzlingly white in the sunlight of mid-afternoon. They mounted the twenty or so steps that led up to the main entrance — the only really wide doorway in the city — and went in, to find that the interior was as severely plain as the outside. It was divided into three nearly equal parts by two long rows of great, round pillars that ran the length of the temple and lighted by window openings high up in both side walls. The whole interior was quite without ornament. Mildred, who had been told by Nursie about the beauties of the cathedrals in her native country — England — and on the Continent, where Nursie had been as a lady's-maid when young, had hoped to find something of the sort in the temple and was much disappointed. Although it still wanted fifteen minutes to four, the hour for

the ceremony, the temple was already well filled and our friends could not see much as they stood on the floor, for even such comparatively small things as heads and hands sort of clutter up the view when there are lots of them of different shape, height, and sizes about. Dick Dickson led them down the left aisle and up a short stairway.

"This is the visitors' gallery," he explained, as they came out upon a small platform supported between two of the pillars and surrounded by a heavy balustrade. Luckily they were the only visitors, so they had a splendid view of everything that went on below them. Dick excused himself, going down to rejoin his family on the floor, to take part in the ceremony with them.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

WHAT HAPPENED IN THE TEMPLE

IMAGINE what a peculiar sight that was — a throng of beings constructed only of heads, hands, and feet! Even though our friends had seen hundreds of the islanders in their two-day visit, it took them several minutes to get used to the spectacle. At the end of the temple opposite the main doorway there was a great platform, as bare of ornament as everything else and quite empty except for a large golden barrel, with a cover, that stood in the exact center. The thickest part of the crowd was right in front of this platform. Hundreds of Oracle Islanders — perhaps even thousands — were massed there, more thickly than any crowd of persons like you and me could be, for each one of them took up but little room.

In the corner of the temple at the forward end of the right aisle, our friends noticed that the bareness of the walls was broken by an arched opening like a large window, with a curtain of rich, gold cloth drawn across it, the only ornament in all the great, bare place

— unless you could call the gold barrel an ornament. But what puzzled them most of all was the long row of cupboards, about as tall as a man, that completely lined both side walls. Painted white, like everything else, our friends had not noticed them at first. They were very curious to know what was in them and guessed everything except what was right, as they were soon to find out.

At five minutes of four a great bell, sounding as if it must have been above them in the tower, tolled one single, booming stroke that echoed mysteriously through the huge hall. At once there was a movement in the crowd. Those nearest the cupboards opened the doors. There was nothing in them but books — thousands of them, all just the same size and bound alike. These were rapidly passed out and, before our friends could recover from their astonishment, every person in the throng had one. They appeared to be weighty volumes. Some of the children had quite a task to hold them in their little hands, so heavy were they.

Precisely at four another stroke sounded on the hidden bell and, from some entrance our friends could not see from their position, there emerged a procession of tall men and women,

headed by one extraordinarily large man, evidently the chief priest. Strange figures they were, the only Oracle Islanders who were dressed up. Hanging from the usual ruff around the neck, each one wore a long, white robe, reaching nearly to the ground and flopping in a limpsy way that showed the priests were not blessed (or bothered, according to the way you look at it) with any more of a body than their fellow citizens. Each priest carried a large book in the left hand, the chief priest bearing the largest of all, a huge thing like one of your biggest school atlases. They passed slowly through the mass of people, who made way for them, mounted the platform and ranged themselves in a long row across it, facing the congregation. The head priest stepped forward to the edge of the platform, laid his great book on the cover of the barrel, opened it, and raised his right hand aloft.

The din that ensued was terrific, deafening. Every single man, woman, and child in the huge room began to read from his or her book at the very top of his or her voice. Mildred thrust her fingers into her ears and Tom, grasping the balustrade with one hand — for it

seemed as if the gust of unexpected sound would actually bowl them over — threw an arm around her to support her. Gibby came over and leaned down to speak to them, shouting to make himself heard.

"Funny, is n't it?" said he. "Do you suppose there's a prize for the loudest?"

"What is it, anyway?" Mildred demanded.

"Just a regular part of the ceremony, I suppose," Gibby answered. And no doubt he was right, for each member of the congregation yelled away at his own sweet will, quite undisturbed, the vioces of the children shrilling above all the rest.

"And what are they reading?" Tom asked.

"I don't know," replied Gibby, "but I suspect they are passages from the works of their famous philosopher; you know — the one Dick told us about, who taught them how to reduce themselves to the lowest terms. What was his name — Mart Martson, or something like that?"

"But it's all so confused," cried Mildred as loud as she could, though the others could scarcely hear her. "They can't all be reading the same thing."

"Probably each one is allowed to read his

favorite passage or any passage he wants to," Gibby explained. "Sounds like the Tower of Babel, does n't it?"

Just then a familiar, thin, high-pitched voice close at hand came to their ears. It was Old Salt. The mighty chorus had excited him greatly. Drawing himself up to his full height, with shining eyes and outstretched arms, he began to chant as loudly as he could a new verse of his favorite song. This is what he sang, doing his best to shriek louder than anybody else and nearly succeeding, because of the peculiar shrillness of his voice:

> Tee-did'-um, tee-di'-dum, tee-do'-dum, tee-diddle,
> Ol' Davy Jones is a-scrapin' of his fiddle;
> An' if he played jest twict as loud
> He could n't be heard in this here crowd.

The joke, however, was on Old Salt. He was so busy singing his song over and over again, trying to make it louder each time, that he paid no attention to any one or anything and failed completely to notice that the chief priest was raising his hand again. At this signal the reading stopped just as abruptly as it had begun. The only sound in all the temple was Old Salt's squeaky voice at its highest pitch, singing his funny song. Of

course every one looked up; the chief priest frowned severely. Mildred, Tom, and Gibby burst into a roar of laughter. They could n't help it, Old Salt was such a comical sight. He had stopped right in the middle of a word and stood there, his arms still outstretched and his mouth frozen wide open with embarrassment, though not a sound came out of it. Realizing how rude they were to laugh at such a moment, the children and Gibby dropped down behind the balustrade to hide themselves, covered with blushes, while Old Salt, coming out of his trance at last, almost fell flat, blushing worst of all.

In a minute or two Tom ventured to peep out. The books had been passed back to the cupboards as quickly as they were distributed. All the people were intently watching the chief priest, so our friends were free to stand up again. The big man raised his arm once more. "Hark to the words of Mart Martson!" said he in a strong, impressive voice.

Then he began to read; that is, he began to shout just as the others had, reading so loud and so fast our friends could not understand a single word. It lasted not more than three minutes, however — much to the satisfaction

of Old Salt, and of the others too, if the truth be told, for they were getting decidedly bored. Mildred longed for some music, such as she heard when she went to church with Nursie. The chief priest closed his big book, raised his arm once more, and walked in a stately way to the end of the platform nearest the arched opening with its golden curtain. All the priests and all the people turned to face in that direction.

"Will the worshipful Oracle graciously deign to answer our unworthy questions?" said the chief priest, with a very low bow toward the curtain.

There was a moment of absolute silence; then there were several more moments of absolute silence. In fact, it began to seem as if the priest would get no answer to his question. He evidently thought so, too, for he straightened up, turned to the congregation and raised that arm once more.

"The Oracle holds us unworthy of answer," said he. "She must be propitiated."

"What does that mean?" demanded Mildred. "Pro-pro-pro — ?"

"Pitiated," added Tom, who happened to remember the end of the word, though he knew no more than Mildred what it meant.

"Well," said Old Salt, "I'm not at all sartain what it *does* mean; but from the looks of things I rather suspect it's what we called 'takin' up a collection' in the Methody church back where I was born. That's what they seem to be doin'."

Sure enough. The chief priest had taken off the head of the great gold barrel and the congregation, forming in line, filed by with a rapidity impossible to persons built like you and me, each and every one dropping some coin into the barrel as he passed. Soon it was filled and brimming over.

"My, what a lot of money!" exclaimed Tom. "I wonder where it goes to."

Old Salt shook his head dubiously. "And I," said he, "wonder where Arty is," though Tom could see no connection between the two remarks.

When the contribution had all been deposited, the chief priest turned again to the gold curtain and, again bowing very low, repeated his question: "Will the worshipful Oracle graciously deign to answer our unworthy questions?"

Again there was a moment of absolute silence, soon broken, however, by a thin, tin-

kling sound of music, very faint in that great space.

"A music-box," whispered Tom to Mildred.

Mildred listened intently for a moment. "Why!" she whispered back, "I know that tune. It's 'The Blue Bells of Scotland.' That's the tune Belinda used to play inside her when you pushed the button in her back."

The little tune ended. The chief priest turned again to the people.

"Now is the Oracle in kindly mood," said he. "Her sweet response shows that your offering has propitiated her. She is ready to answer our unworthy questions. What is first?"

But what the first question was — or any of the others — we shall never know. One of the under priests stepped forward, opened his book, and began to read it. It was uncommonly long for a question — there must have been a couple of hundred words in it; but as he read just as all the others had, as loud and as fast as possible, not a word could our friends understand. It must have been a very serious question, however, probably one that concerned the government of the city or something equally important, for when it was ended the

priest and people all bowed low and waited in silence for the answer. There was a moment's pause; then, from behind the curtain a squeaky awkward voice made itself heard.

"Papa!" it said; and then again, "Papa!"

There was a glad shout from all the people. "Papa!" cried the chief priest in his great voice. "Papa! Which, being interpreted in our language, means 'Yes.' Oh, gracious Oracle, it shall be done as you decree!"

Several other questions followed. The second was answered by "Mamma" instead of "Papa." All the people groaned instead of shouting and the chief priest interpreted "Mamma" to mean "No." Evidently the Oracle Islanders preferred to have their questions answered with a "yes;" but whenever the Oracle replied "Mamma," her unfavorable verdict was accepted without question or protest, except for the groan in chorus.

"Let's git out of here," said Old Salt, after about half-a-dozen questions had been answered. "There's nothin' very excitin' about this."

"No," said Mildred. "I don't think it would be nice to leave before the ceremony is over, when the Dicksons were so kind as to

invite us." She was right, though they were all quite bored by the proceedings by this time. (Perhaps *you* are bored, reading about them.) But it was lucky they gave in to Mildred and stayed — as you will see.

When the tenth question had been asked and answered, there was a longer pause than usual; then the chief priest raised both his arms, instead of only one, and, bowing more deeply than ever before, lowered his great voice to a most respectful tone and said: "Will the gracious Oracle deign to let her unworthy subjects gaze upon her?"

At that, every one in the temple put his hands on the floor a little ahead of his feet and bowed his head very low. They would all have been kneeling down, you see, if they had had anything to kneel upon. The unseen music-box began to play "The Blue Bells of Scotland" again and the golden curtain, parting in the middle, drew slowly back to either side. It revealed a little room, like an alcove, painted in very beautiful, bright colors; without doubt the rest of the temple had been kept so plain and severe so that the Oracle's shrine would seem the more gorgeous by comparison. There was nothing in the little room except an ela-

borate gold chair like a throne; and on this there was seated something that appeared to be a small but perfect woman. A strong beam of clear light fell from above full on her face.

Mildred gasped and her eyes almost popped out of her head. Despite the faded dress — no doubt the result of a long bath in salt water — despite the paleness of her cheeks, due to the same cause, and despite the golden crown somebody had put on her head, Mildred recognized the Oracle in the twinkling of an eye.

"It's Belinda!" she cried. She was so excited her voice stuck in her throat, making so little noise that none of the devout people below heard her; but Old Salt heard — and understood.

"Come on!" he cried to Gibby, rushing off down the balcony stairs. Old Salt, you may have noticed, was more a man of action than of words. Gibby, too, was a man of action. He did not hesitate. Hastily whispering to Tom, "You and Mildred go out in the square at once and wait until we come," he rushed off pell-mell after Old Salt.

Below all was still. The prostrate people, intent upon the Oracle, were so absorbed that

the little disturbance created by Old Salt and Gibby in their hasty exit attracted no attention. Mildred, too, was gazing at Belinda no less intently, but Tom took her firmly by the hand and drew her away. On tiptoe they stole through the silent throng, out the big doorway, into the square.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

THE CAPTURE AND ESCAPE

As he dashed down the balcony stairs, Old Salt reasoned that there must be an entrance at the forward end of the temple, for the priests had come in that way. This would bring him to Belinda more quickly, so he ran forward instead of toward the main doorway. Sure enough. In the farther corner he found the expected door. It was open. Rushing out, with long-legged Gibby close at his heels, he raced along the end wall of the temple, hoping to find a second door at the other corner which must lead beneath the platform on which Belinda's throne stood. Good luck again! The door was there — but locked! Old Salt put his big shoulder against it and it gave way readily, with almost no noise. Even in his hurry it flashed over him that the few doors there were on Oracle Island could not be very strongly secured; otherwise the inhabitants, having no shoulders to put against them, could never force them if they were accidentally locked. There were some disadvantages,

after all, in being reduced in bulk according to the theories of Mart Martson.

The door opened into a dark, narrow passage only a few feet long. They stole along this on tiptoe. Soon it ended in a small, low chamber, dimly lighted by a single lamp. In the chamber was a lone figure — Artful Arty! So absorbed was he tending to Belinda, he had not heard them at all. Standing underneath the platform, he could not be seen from the inside of the temple; but the strings that made Belinda say "Papa" and "Mamma" hung down beneath the throne so he could pull them; and a hole in the platform, behind the throne, allowed him to reach his arm up through to push the button in her back that started the music-box.

Old Salt — as I said only a few moments ago — was a man of action. He whipped off the big red handkerchief he always wore around his neck instead of a collar, sprang with one great bound on Arty, covering his mouth with a huge hand, bore him backward to the floor, knelt on him, and, drawing his pipe from his pocket, slipped it — for want of a better gag — into Arty's mouth, binding it tight with the handkerchief, which he knotted

firmly at the back of the little man's head. There was no danger that Arty would make a noise after that.

Gibby, too, was a man of action and a quick thinker as well. Just as Old Salt finished, Belinda was coming to the final notes of "The Blue Bells of Scotland." Gibby reached up through the hole in the platform and, with great presence of mind, pushed the button and started the tune off again as soon as it ended, so that the people would not notice that anything was wrong — would think, on the contrary, that the Oracle was unusually gracious in revealing herself to them for so long. Then he noticed that Arty, though well gagged, was still kicking. Old Salt, big as he was, could not sit on *all* of the little man. Gibby looked about and saw a stout cord hanging down in one corner of the chamber. Whipping out his knife, he cut off several feet of it, then cut the severed part in two and handed the pieces to Old Salt.

"That must be the curtain rope," said Old Salt. "I hope you did n't cut off too much. Pull it down slowly, while I truss this turkey up." So, as "The Blue Bells of Scotland" drew to an end for the second time, Gibby

slowly closed the gold curtain in time with the music, while Old Salt bound the hands and feet of Arty.

As the curtain came together, a low murmur arose among the priests and people outside; evidently the ceremony did not usually end that way and they were disturbed. This, however, did not worry Old Salt and Gibby. They were ready to leave. The moment the curtains were closed tight, Gibby reached up through the hole, toppled over the throne, and dragged Belinda down, wrapping her hastily in his jacket. Old Salt already had Arty tightly bound. He tucked the little man under one arm and, bearing their prizes, they hurried out into the daylight once more.

Tom and Mildred were waiting for them in the square. Old Salt grabbed Mildred's hand in his free one and all four started off down the broad main avenue at a brisk run. Only a few of the Oracle Islanders had come out of the temple early and these, ignorant of what had happened to their oracle, made no attempt to pursue our friends. When they had gone about half a mile, Old Salt, who, despite his great strength, found it quite a job to run with so unwieldy a bundle as Arty under his arm,

stopped a minute to catch breath and the others followed suit.

"Remember," said Gibby, "this street does not lead to the harbor gate."

"No. We'll bear off to the left a little farther on. That'll fetch us all right," said Old Salt, who had a sailor's sense of direction.

"Look!" cried Tom, who had glanced back. "They're coming!"

Indeed they were — a mob of them that filled the street from wall to wall, with the huge chief priest on ahead, running much faster than any of the others.

"Come on!" shouted Old Salt, grabbing Arty up from the pavement, where he had laid him down to rest his arm. He started off again full tilt, the others after him. In another moment they passed the mouth of a very narrow alley leading off to the left. Old Salt darted into it, followed by the others. "Keep on!" he cried to them. "I'll ketch up with ye in a minute."

He stooped and laid Arty on the ground. Short as the little man was, he still was long enough to block the entire width of the alley. Old Salt ran on a few feet and then stopped. In a moment the chief priest dashed around

the corner into the alley — and just what Old Salt had hoped for happened. The big islander tripped over Arty and fell on top of him. Stunned by the fall, he could not rise and remained there. The other islanders, crowding into the alley, found it impossible to get over the barrier the two men formed. It was easy enough for them to step over any small object, but when it was anything so high as to require jumping they were lost — for how can you jump without legs? And they had n't any! So while they were helping the priest onto his feet again, to clear the alley, Old Salt bolted away after our friends. He had hardly rejoined them when, looking down a side street, they saw the harbor gate and made for it. Free from pursuit, as they thought, they stopped running, keeping on at a fast walk; but before they reached the gate, four or five islanders who had come around another way, rushed in from a side street between them and it. Paying no attention to the others, all the islanders made for Gibby, who was still carrying Belinda wrapped up in his jacket. Of course a pair of hands without anything attached to them cannot do much toward hindering the progress of a man — and Gibby was strong,

though thin — nor can they tear a bundle away from him; but a half-dozen pairs, all grasping at him and his bundle, almost stopped Gibby, particularly as, holding Belinda tight in his arms, he could do nothing to free himself. Mildred, Tom, and Old Salt began to tear the ghost-like hands loose from him, but as soon as one pair was pried off, another took its place. More islanders came up. Soon Gibby and his friends were the center of a mass of waving, struggling heads, arms, and feet, which, if they did them no harm, at least prevented them from escaping.

"I have it!" yelled Tom, as a bright idea struck him. "Step on their toes!"

He began to stamp all about him with his stout shoes. Old Salt and Gibby adopted the idea at once, and even Mildred, who had never knowingly hurt any one or anything in her life, stepped on a toe or two, for she said to herself: "After all, Belinda is mine and they're trying to steal her again."

Did you ever have your bare toes trod upon — accidentally, of course? And do you remember how it felt? Well, then, you can readily imagine that it was n't long before the crowd had had quite enough. A dozen

islanders were hopping about on one foot, nursing the bruised toes of the other in one of their hands — a funny sight they made! — and all the others fell back to a respectful distance. Tom, Mildred, and Gibby, happy to be free again, slipped at once through the gateway, while Old Salt scaled the wall and joined them outside. As they turned to look back, they saw through the gateway the chief priest and Arty, freed from his bonds, coming at a run. The priest was limping as a result of his fall, but he kept up a very good pace at that. He reached the gateway first and came outside, but several persons in the crowd cried to him to look out for his toes and he kept well away from our friends.

"Watch Arty!" said Gibby in a low tone.

The little man stepped back a few paces and then, running full tilt at the gateway, as he had the day before, took his headlong dive; but this time he stuck fast!

"Hurrah! hurrah!" cried Gibby, capering about like a five-year-old boy and waving Belinda, now freed from the jacket, about his head. "I rubbed his soap off the gateposts! Remember when I left you and went back

this afternoon? I rubbed all his soap off the gateposts! He'll stick for a long time! Hurrah!"

The others joined in Gibby's laughter and capers, even Old Salt performing a few clumsy hops in honor of the occasion. But soon he stopped.

"Come on," said he, "let's go. I shall feel safer when we're all aboard the Dove."

They started off for the harbor. When they reached the top of the hill, they looked back and saw that quite a number of islanders were filing out of the side of the gate not stopped up by Arty and following them. Remembering the bruised toes, none of them attempted to come near, however, and our friends reached the quay without any further hindrance.

Cap'n Bolin, remembering Old Salt's warning, had kept awake all the afternoon, an unusual feat for him. He watched the shore through his glasses and when he saw our friends coming down the hill, sent the gig ashore for them manned by half the crew, ordering the rest to set sail. The gig was already at the quay when the adventurers reached it. Mildred was given the place of honor in the stern, with Belinda in her arms.

Some of the islanders had reached the quay before they cast off, but there was no attempt of any sort to prevent them leaving and in a few minutes they were all aboard the Dove.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

FINAL ADVENTURES

THE sails were indeed set; but they were of no use, for there was a dead calm. Not a breath of air was stirring, not even enough to swing the Dove around on the end of her chain. She lay perfectly still. This annoyed Old Salt — always a man of action — who wanted to be away. However, he expected no further trouble and there was nothing to do but to order the crew to supper and to go below with the others for his own.

Quartermaster Tom was left on watch. They had hardly begun to eat before he called below to say that Arty was getting into his motor-boat.

"Let him!" said Old Salt. "He can't do nothin' to us." And he went calmly on eating. "Speakin' of that motor-boat, Gibby," he continued a moment later, "I'm suttinly afraid you and me have ruined Arty's source of income. Did you see all them poor dupes droppin' money into that gold barrel? I'll bet eight dollars to a nickel that the old chief

priest and Arty whacked up on every cent that went into it. Ownin' the Oracle *and* the barrel, they could run the whole blame island just as they pleased and get rich as rich in the bargain, the bloomin' rascals!"

"I'm sure you're right," Gibby agreed. "I'm only sorry we —"

He was interrupted by Tom's voice, calling Old Salt again.

"Come on deck, Cap'n," said he.

Old Salt detected something unusual in his tone and came on deck at once, though not in a way to alarm the others.

"What's the matter, Tom?" he asked.

"Look at the shore, Cap'n," answered the boy.

Old Salt stared hard, first at one side of the harbor and then at the other. "I swan to goodness!" he exclaimed finally. "Either there's somethin' the matter with my eyes or else them shores *are* nearer us than they wuz!"

"That's it!" cried Tom. "They *are* nearer — and they're getting still nearer every minute, slowly but steadily. I've been watching them."

"It can't be!" protested Old Salt.

"Why not?" demanded Tom. "If they've

got machinery that floats this whole island about and turns it around, it would be easy enough for them to close the harbor."

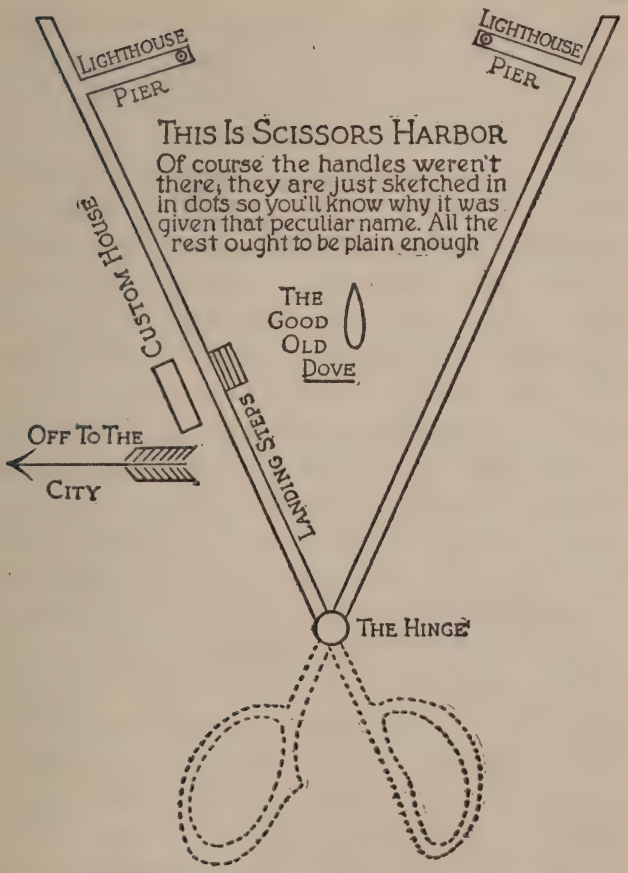
"I see!" cried Old Salt. "That's why they call it 'Scissors Harbor'! It shuts up just like the blades of a pair of shears and that stunted iron pillar up there at the end of the harbor must be the hinge it swings on. And then what happens to the Dove?"

"Anyway, she won't be crushed," replied Tom. "Those piers the two lighthouses are on will prevent the sides from meeting, but we'll be locked in just as if we were in an inland lake, miles from the ocean."

You remember I told you the harbor, with its concrete quays, was just like a V — only at the open end the two lighthouses were built out on piers. (See illustration opposite.)

You can see that, when the harbor closed up, swinging on the hinge, the ends of the two lighthouse piers would meet, and the Dove, though having very little room to spare, would not quite be crushed.

The wind showed no sign of making and there was not the slightest hope of escaping by trying to sail without wind. Old Salt did not hesitate a minute. First he called the crew


LIGHTHOUSE
PIER
LIGHTHOUSE
PIER
THIS IS SCISSORS HARBOR
Of course the handles weren't there, they are just sketched in in dots so you'll know why it was given that peculiar name. All the rest ought to be plain enough
CUSTOM HOUSE
THE GOOD OLD DOVE
LANDING STEPS
OFF TO THE CITY
THE HINGE

to man the capstan. They worked with a will as, of course, they too had noticed the harbor was closing. Old Salt himself, with Tom,

Gibby, and Mildred, who had come on deck attracted by the unusual noise, all lent a hand. Mildred was ready to be very frightened indeed until Tom pointed out to her that nothing worse than being locked in could happen to the Dove. The minute the anchor was up, Old Salt ordered the crew into the Dove's largest boat and passed a hawser over the bow in the hope of being able to tow the schooner out before the harbor could close. The men tugged furiously at the oars and soon had the Dove moving slowly along.

Old Salt's plan surely would have succeeded if a new element had not suddenly entered to spoil it. They heard the "putt-putt" of Arty's swift motor-boat. In a moment it came alongside the Dove and, turning sharply, headed in between the schooner's bow and the towing boat. Just as Arty passed under the hawser he picked up a short sword and slashed at it. The recoil knocked him into the bottom of the boat and tore the sword out of his hands, hurling it far off into the water — but his ruse had succeeded. The hawser was so taut that the single stroke had been enough to cut it almost through and it parted: the strain suddenly released, all the rowers in the

Dove's boat fell over flat on their backs, with their legs in the air. It was a comical sight. If the situation had not been so serious, our friends would have had a hearty laugh.

"What *shall* we do?" cried Mildred in real alarm.

"We got to git ahold of Arty's boat some way," said Old Salt.

"Yes — but how?" asked Gibby.

"I have it!" cried Tom. "The bows and arrows!"

So, after all the long voyage, while they had lain quietly in the hold, they were to be useful. In a jiffy the crate was on deck and broken open. Tom selected a bow as big as he could handle, strung it quickly, and notched a long, heavy arrow into place. Arty, in the meanwhile, was circling slowly about the Dove in his boat, very much pleased with himself and shouting derisively at our friends.

"Oh, don't hurt him!" cried tender-hearted Mildred.

"No; I'll just *scare* him!" answered Tom, taking careful aim.

There was nothing he liked better at home than playing with bow and arrow out in the back yard and long practice had made him an

expert. He let fly. It was a wonderful shot. Clean through the peak of Arty's cap went the arrow, carrying it fifty feet away into the harbor, though not a single hair on his head was disturbed. (Do you remember William Tell and the apple?) One experience of the sort was enough for the little man, however; he dove into the small cabin at the bow of his boat, leaving it free to go where it would. Luckily it was steered by a tiller — not by a wheel. (You must have seen a tiller in some small boat, my dears. It is the long stick at the stern by means of which the steering is done. You push it toward one side and the boat heads off in the opposite direction.)

Tom quickly fitted another arrow and took a very, very careful aim at the head of this tiller. Whizz — ! It was another masterly shot. The arrow stuck full in the tiller-head and its force threw the tiller over away from the Dove, heading the motor-boat in toward the schooner in consequence. By good luck — you may have noticed our friends have had a lot of good luck in this story — the tiller swung just far enough over to steer the motor-boat close under the Dove's stern without quite bumping into it. As the boat approached,

Gibby, thinking quick as lightning, swung his long body over the stern, hanging by his hands, and as it passed beneath him, dropped lightly into it. In another minute he had steered it up to the stern ladder and stopped it there.

But even now our friends were by no means out of the woods — or, rather, out of the harbor. One glance at the shores, now quite near, told Old Salt that it was too late to hope to tow the Dove safely outside, even with the help of the motor-boat.

"We must keep the harbor from closin'!" he cried. "Quick! Get that spare boom over into the motor-boat!" (A boom, my dears, is the big stick at the bottom of the sails, to which they are attached. Booms are made from the trunks of good-sized trees and are very strong, stout pieces of wood. Ships carry a spare boom, in case one of those in use should be broken.)

The others did not know what he had in mind, but they did not hesitate. The crew, who were back on board by this time, made ropes fast to the boom and lowered it into the boat. Old Salt directed them to place it crosswise, so that one end should stick out on either

side. Then he and Gibby, with three of the crew, followed by Tom, with his bow and an armful of arrows, jumped into the motor-boat and started for the mouth of the harbor, Old Salt steering and Gibby running the motor. Tom, going to the bow, quickly closed and locked the cabin door, shutting Arty in, and then took his station there, with an arrow ready to shoot if necessary.

As they approached the harbor mouth, the lighthouse piers had drawn so near together that there was barely room for the motor-boat to enter the space between them, with the boom sticking out. Gibby, at Old Salt's order, stopped the motor so that the boat lay still just between the pierheads. All gave a cheer as they realized what their captain had planned. In a minute the pierheads, closing in, bumped on either end of the boom, holding it fast between them. Old Salt immediately backed the boat a little way into the harbor for safety. Quite a crowd of islanders had gathered on the pierheads and a few of the younger men began to throw stones, but Tom skillfully ripped a neck-ruff off one of them with a well-directed arrow and no more came.

There were a few moments of suspense,

while all watched to see how Old Salt's plan would succeed. Alas! luck was not with our friends this time. For a minute or two the boom resisted and the pierheads were held fast; but no piece of wood that ever grew could stand for long the tremendous force of the unseen machinery that closed the harbor. Suddenly there was a tremendous crash. The boom buckled, breaking squarely in the middle and hurling great splinters all about. The islanders cheered; our friends groaned.

"Well," said Old Salt, ordering Gibby to start the motor and heading back for the Dove, "there's no use cryin' over spilt milk — or busted booms. Here we are and here we stay for a while, I guess."

CHAPTER TWENTY

OFF FOR HOME

NIGHT was coming on by the time they were on board again. It was perfectly plain that there was nothing to do except to wait for daylight and see what the morrow would bring. The half-eaten supper was finished and then the crew turned in for the night. Our friends, however, were much too excited to stay below. With pillows and blankets they made themselves as comfortable as possible on deck. It was a very quiet party with little talking. Very soon all were off to sleep except Gibby, who was left on watch with Tom's bow and arrows in case the islanders should try any new trick. Fortunately they did not, for, to tell the truth, it was n't more than five minutes before Gibby, who had sat down by the wheel for a moment's rest, dropped off to sleep as fast as any of the others, his head resting on the binnacle box — not a very soft pillow.

Mildred woke up first. The moon was shining full in her face, so strongly that it had made her open her eyes. Half awake, she

thought to herself how peculiar that was, for she remembered that clouds had gathered as the sun went down — clouds much too thick for the moon to shine through. She sat up on deck and blinked — once, twice, three times. How close the moon seemed! And instead of looking down from above, it was shining straight into her eyes as she sat there.

"Psst!" came a low, warning hiss from the direction of the moon. She suddenly realized what was going on.

"Oh, are you there, Moony?" she called softly.

"Yes, my dear," answered the little man. "Sitting on the rail right behind the moon and so black you can't see me at all."

"Are n't you on duty to-night?"

"No. Don't you see how cloudy it is? I have a night off. Are you all right?"

"Yes, thank you, and so are all the others," she replied, "though how we're ever going to leave here I don't know. They've got us locked into the harbor."

"Oh — have they?" remarked Moon Man, with rather a sarcastic tone in his voice. "We'll see about that. Watch now!"

He grasped the moon by its handles and

tilted it so that it shone full in Tom's face. In less than two seconds the boy sat up with a jerk and would have cried out if Mildred had not held one hand over his mouth and patted his shoulder with the other to reassure him. He had a quiet laugh as soon as he understood what was happening. Then Moon Man played the same trick on Old Salt, who was very glad to see him. Finally Moon Man turned the moon full on Gibby, who was not more than ten feet away from him. The long man sprang up with a bound, while they all laughed heartily at him.

"You're a fine watchman, ain't ye?" laughed Old Salt.

Gibby blushed to the roots of his hair, he was so ashamed of having been caught asleep when he was supposed to be on duty, so they laughed at him again. When they had quite finished Moon Man spoke.

"What a fine pickle you're all in, are n't you?" said he. "Locked up in this harbor miles from home and no way to get out!"

"Moony," said Old Salt, "do ye know who I was a-dreamin' of just as ye woke me up?"

"Of me, I suppose," answered the little man, sticking the moon in the shrouds so it

would light up the deck and joining the others, who all sat cross-legged on the deck like Turks — or tailors.

"Ye guessed it first time off," assented Old Salt. "I rather suspected you'd be comin' round to see how Mildred and the rest of us was gettin' on."

"Just what I did," agreed Moon Man. "And how *are* you getting on?"

"Not at all just now," said Old Salt, rising and going over to the rail.

"What are you going to do?" Tom asked him.

"Oh, just goin' to converse with the night," replied the sailor. Then he called out into the darkness: "Mary! Oh, Mary!"

Moon Man chuckled. The others watched Old Salt in bewilderment, too astonished even to ask questions.

"Is that you, Old Salt?" a very pleasant voice answered, appearing to come from a little way out in the harbor. "I have n't seen you for a long while. How are you?"

"Fust-rate, thank ye," replied Old Salt, "though I been havin' a lot of adventures that ain't fittin' fer a man at my time of life. Are you well, Mary?"

"Yes, thank you," answered the voice.

Tongues were loosed now. For once Gibby was first.

"Where is she?" demanded he.

"Is she in swimming?" asked Tom.

"Who is Mary, anyway?" inquired Mildred eagerly.

"My sister!" answered Moon Man, with one of his chuckles, rising.

"What!" cried Mildred. "The Old Woman who sweeps the cobwebs out of the sky!"

"Exactly!" replied Moon Man, turning the moon around so that it shone out over the water.

"The airship! The airship!" they all cried together, except Old Salt, who knew very well it must be there.

Indeed, there it was, not more than fifty feet or so away from the Dove. It was not a very large airship, though quite big enough for them all; an airship much like the smaller ones you have seen (at least in pictures), like one of the naval airships they call a "blimp." Above was the long, cigar-shaped gas-bag. From it hung the boat they were to travel in, for in this airship — which often had to settle on the ocean, and, in fact, lived on the waters

of a quiet harbor when at home — the place for passengers was built just like a real boat. How the metal-work glittered in the strong moonlight! They could see the propellers on either side, the wheel in front for steering, with a compass and binnacle just as on the Dove, and the machinery farther back. And there stood Mary, Moon Man's sister, the Old Woman who sweeps the cobwebs out of the sky, looking, with her high, peaked hat, for all the world like a witch, except for her kind, pleasant face, such as no witch ever had. Beside her was her big broom.

"Well," said Moon Man, while the others were still lost in astonishment, "shall we go aboard and start for home?"

"Hurrah!" they cried.

"But what shall we do with the Dove?" asked Gibby.

"Oh, she'll be all right," said Old Salt. "I'm sure the islanders won't keep her when they find out *we're* gone. Cap'n Bolin and the crew can bring her home all right."

"Cap'n Bolin!" cried Mildred, Tom, and Gibby together, suddenly recollecting they had seen nothing of him for hours. "Where is he?"

"Here I am!" answered a sleepy voice from the companionway. "Is supper ready yet?"

"Supper!" cried Tom. "We don't eat supper at eleven o'clock at night! Where have you been?"

"Oh," replied the Cap'n apologetically, "just down in my bunk taking a little nap. You see I had to keep awake all the afternoon watching for you people, so when you were safe aboard I just turned in for a moment. I missed my after-dinner nap and I'm afraid I'm not much help without it, I'm so used to it. Has there been any excitement?"

"Excitement!" they all exclaimed together.

"Nothin' but it!" said Old Salt, explaining things to him briefly.

When told that he was to be left in charge of the Dove, he was quite content.

"After all, she's *my* schooner, is n't she?" he said. (Nobody had thought of that!) "I'm sure everything will be all right. I've got a smarter crew than my old one. I don't believe I'll eat any supper after all — I'll just have my sleep out. Good-night, all; a pleasant voyage!" And with this abrupt farewell he turned and went below again, cool and calm as a cucumber.

"All aboard the airship!" cried Moon Man, who was getting impatient to be off.

"Just a moment!" cried Mildred, running below. By the time she was back on deck with Belinda tight in her arms (I really believe the others would have forgotten Belinda after all!) Old Salt and Tom had the gig alongside. Down the stern ladder they all went for the last time, Moon Man first, lighting the way with the moon, then Gibby, Old Salt, Tom, and finally Mildred. As she left the deck she turned around for a final glance at the Dove.

"Good-bye, dear old Dove!" she said softly. "I shall never forget you!"

There certainly were tears in her eyes — and I'm not at all sure Tom did n't have a considerable lump in his throat as he went down the ladder, though he said nothing. Perhaps it would n't have been safe for him to speak.

In another moment they were climbing aboard the airship. The Old Woman welcomed Mildred with a motherly hug and they were great friends at once. Old Salt went forward to the wheel and Moon Man back to the engines, while Gibby and Tom prepared

to haul in the anchor. Just then a thought struck Tom.

"What about Arty?" he demanded.

"Ho, ho, ho!" chuckled Old Salt. "It makes me laugh every time I think of that there gold barrel. I'm afraid we've spoiled his little game; he'll have to think up another — but he's clever at that. He's all safe, locked up in his little cabin. The crew will take care of him when they find him." And he chuckled again.

"I should n't like to be in his shoes!" thought Tom. (Neither would I — would you?) Poor Arty! Though I'm afraid he deserved whatever may have happened to him, never offering to restore Belinda when he learned that she belonged to Mildred; and then fooling all those poor islanders — who were n't "all there" as you know — by pretending she was an Oracle, making a good living at it, too, with the help of the rascally old priest. (I wonder what became of him?) No; there's no use wasting our time in being sorry for Arty!

As soon as the anchor was in, Moon Man threw a piece of black canvas over the moon.

"We'll have to keep it covered for a while,"

said he. "If people saw it shine on a cloudy night they'd be afraid something was wrong with the universe." Then he started the engines. "Electricity," he explained. "No noisy airship for me, with one of those horrible, puttery gasoline engines!"

. . . . . .

And now, though Belinda was found and the long quest ended, our friends began what was perhaps the most beautiful part of their adventures. No pen of mine is equal to describing the loveliness of the trip in the airship. Old Salt pointed her head up at a gentle angle and off they went on a bee-line for the clouds, so quietly, so steadily, so surely that neither Mildred nor Tom nor Gibby was afraid in the slightest, though they had never been air-sailing before. The only noise was the soft purring of the propellers. It was a very dark night. Below they could see only the twinkle of the two lighthouses, close together, guarding the sleeping Dove as she lay locked in Scissors Harbor, and, very faintly, the outline of Oracle Island, blacker even than the black night itself.

By and by Mildred felt something gently, very gently, brushing her face — feathers or a cobweb she thought.

"What is it?" she asked, passing her hand across her cheek as if to brush them off.

"We're just going through the clouds, dear," explained the Old Woman, who was sitting with her in the stern. "There are so many to-night I could n't begin to sweep them away. We'll be above them in a minute."

Moon Man picked up the moon, took it forward to the very bow, and planted it there. He whipped off its black cover. Mildred, Tom, and Gibby almost stopped breathing for a moment as its beams shone out. Never in their lives had they seen anything a hundredth part so beautiful. The airship, now level, was sailing peacefully along over the most marvelous ocean you can imagine — an ocean of clouds! Great white, foamy streamers, strung out in long lines, twisted and turned beneath them in the wind. From time to time a huge, cloudy billow thrust up its head near them or in the distance, only to vanish into nothing, reflecting a thousand rainbow colors in the moonbeams as it burst. But of such billows they were not afraid, for cloud waves have none of the cruel power of water. Above was the clearest, deepest, most beautiful dark blue

heaven, full of wonderful stars, twice as bright and twinkly as they look from the earth. They were sailing between the clouds and the sky.

Not a word was spoken; there are no words that could do even faint justice to such beauty as surrounded them. They all sat still as mice, drinking in the glory of the exquisite night.

The airship kept on its steady, unwavering way. "Purr, purr," went the propellers, singing an endless lullaby. Mildred's head nodded. She straightened up again with a jerk. "How peculiar!" she thought. "I don't know where we're going. Moon Man said something about home, but somehow I don't seem to care much where we *are* going. Where *is* home, anyway?"

Her head nodded again. She was only a little girl and it was a long time since she had slept. The Old Woman gathered her, still holding fast to Belinda, into her motherly arms.

She slept. And then she dreamed; she dreamed she was falling, falling, a long, long way. She was not frightened, for she fell as slowly and lightly as a feather or a bit of eider-down. She seemed to have fallen out of

the airship, for she could not see the others any more nor the ship itself, though Belinda was still in her arms and there was moonlight around her. She tried to call out to them, but her little voice was lost in the vastness of space. The cobwebs came again. "I'm falling through the clouds," she thought. Soon she had passed through them into the dark night beneath. Slowly, slowly, she fell. The night grew darker and darker. Where was Belinda? Was she still in her arms? Had she slipped away?

It seemed hours as she dropped down and ever down. "I must be falling into the middle of the earth," she thought, "for I've had time to pass the surface long ago."

Down, down! At last there came just the least little shock. She had stopped falling. She lay quite still.

. . . . . .

Mildred opened her eyes. The sun was streaming in through the great window of her chamber, greeting her with a warm kiss. The door opened and Nursie came in with a cheery "Good-morning!"

Mildred sat up in bed with a start. For once in her life she forgot to return Nursie's greeting.

She held up her empty arms and stared at them.

"Where's Belinda?" she asked.

Nursie stood stock-still in astonishment. "Why, what's the matter with you, Mildred?" she demanded. "You know she was lost overboard months ago, one day when we were out rowing in the harbor!"

"So she was," agreed Mildred, thinking for a moment. "Then where's Tom?"

But that was a question Nursie never could answer. Can you?

THE END

BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY
3 9999 09852 245 9